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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 19 OCTOBER 2025 | SUNDAY | BENGALURU | 26 RABI' II, 1447 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 285 | Pages: 8

Every inch of Pak is within BrahMos' range: Rajnath

Munir warns India of 'decisive response' to any provocation

LUCKNOW/ISLAMABAD, 18 OCT

In a stern message to Pakistan, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday declared that "every inch of Pakistan's territory lies within range of BrahMos," calling Operation Sindoor just a "trailer" of India's capabilities.

Speaking at the BrahMos Aerospace unit in Lucknow, Singh said the missile system symbolises India's growing strategic confidence. "BrahMos is not just a missile, it is a testament to India's rising power. The success of Operation Sindoor proved that victory is becoming a habit," he stated.

The Minister, alongside Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, flagged off the first batch of BrahMos missiles manufactured at the Lucknow facility, calling it a milestone in India's defence manufacturing journey. Singh announced that 100 missiles will be produced annually, with future capacity set to increase. The unit is expected to generate 3,000 crore in turnover and 500 crore in GST in the next financial year.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and UP CM Yogi Adityanath during the inauguration of BrahMos unit in Lucknow on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Operation Sindoor, launched on 7 May, targeted terror infrastructure in Pakistan and PoK in retaliation for the 22 April Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians. BrahMos missiles were deployed to strike airbases and defence installations. The conflict ended after four days, following DGMO-level talks on 10 May.

In response, Pakistan Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir warned India against any provocation. Addressing cadets at the Pakistan Military Academy, Munir said, "There is no space for war in a nuclear-armed environment. Any provocation will meet a decisive response."

- Operation Sindoor targeted terror infrastructure in Pakistan in retaliation for the 22 April Pahalgam attack.

Munir accused India of using terrorism to destabilise Pakistan and vowed action against "proxies using Afghan soil." He reiterated Pakistan's support for Kashmir and stressed the importance of resolving "core issues" under international norms.

Meanwhile, Singh praised the BrahMos project's contribution to both national security and the economy, calling Lucknow "a symbol of transformation." Adityanath said UP is emerging as a defence manufacturing hub, with the BrahMos unit alone contributing 40 crore in GST and significant job creation.

During the event, Singh and Adityanath inaugurated a booster building, witnessed missile assembly demonstrations, and planted Rudraksh saplings on site. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Dhaka airport blaze halts all operations

DHAKA, 18 OCT

A major fire broke out on Saturday at the cargo complex of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka, forcing the suspension of all flight operations. Thick black smoke covered the area after the blaze, reportedly fuelled by stored chemicals. Thirty-six firefighting units, supported by the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Border Guard Bangladesh, tackled the flames. No casualties were reported. Several incoming international flights were diverted to Chattogram and Sylhet. A Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh spokesperson confirmed that landings and take-offs were suspended "until further notice." This marks the third significant fire in Bangladesh in five days, following deadly incidents at garment and chemical factories in Dhaka and Chittagong. *—PTI*

Silent march for statehood foiled in Leh

LEH, 18 OCT

A planned silent march, jointly called by Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) as part of their agitation for statehood and safeguards under sixth schedule of the constitution, was thwarted here on Saturday as authorities imposed strict security measures and suspended mobile internet. However, Kargil witnessed a peaceful silent march with KDA leaders condemning the restrictions in Leh but welcomed the announcement of a judicial probe into the 24 September firing incident that left several people dead and scores of others injured. Officials said police and paramilitary forces were deployed in strength in Leh and adjoining areas amid a call by the two agitating groups for a two-hour silent march from 10am and three-hour black out from 6pm across Ladakh to express solidarity with those who lost their lives in widespread violence on 24 September, were injured or unlawfully detained. *—PTI*

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Bandh observed in T'gana against HC's stay on BC quota

HYDERABAD, 18 OCT

Telangana witnessed a statewide shutdown on Saturday as Backward Classes (BC) organisations called a bandh demanding restoration of 42 per cent reservation in local bodies. The protest, backed by major political parties including Congress, BRS, and BJP, brought shops, businesses, schools, and public transport to a halt, leaving Deepavali travellers stranded. The bandh followed a Telangana High Court stay on the government's order granting 42 per cent BC reservation, with the Supreme Court refusing to intervene. Leaders and party workers staged dharnas outside bus depots, preventing RTC buses from operating. A few protesters vandalised shops and a petrol pump in Hyderabad, though organisers urged peaceful participation. State ministers, including Ponnam Prabhakar, Vakiti Srihari, and Danasari Seethakka, joined demonstrations alongside opposition leaders. *—Agencies*

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Kabeer, Sibghatullah, and Haroon were killed after returning from a friendly match in Sharana **PHOTO: PTI**

3 Afghan cricketers killed in Pakistani strikes

KABUL, 18 OCT

Afghanistan has pulled out of the upcoming tri-nation T20I series involving Pakistan and Sri Lanka following the killing of three Afghan cricketers in Paktika province. The Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) condemned the attack as a "cowardly act carried out by the Pakistani regime" and expressed deep sorrow over the loss of players Kabeer, Sibghatullah, and Haroon, who were killed after returning from a friendly match in Sharana. Seven others were injured.

Tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan have escalated since clashes broke out along the border on 11 October, leading to dozens of casualties on both sides. A 48-hour ceasefire was later broken by Pakistani airstrikes targeting residential areas in Argun and Bermal districts of Paktika. The Taliban called the strikes a violation of the truce, while talks aimed at de-escalation continue in Doha.

In response to the incident, the ACB withdrew from the tri-series scheduled for 17-29 November in Rawalpindi and Lahore as a mark of respect for the victims. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), however, confirmed the tournament will proceed as planned, engaging with other boards to find a replacement for Afghanistan. Several Afghan players, including star spinner Rashid Khan and former captain Gulbadin Naib, strongly condemned the attacks and supported the board's decision. Rashid described the strikes as "immoral and barbaric". *—PTI*

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MPS' APARTMENT ON FIRE

A massive fire broke out at Brahmaputra Apartments, home to several Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs, near Delhi's RML Hospital on Saturday afternoon. The blaze, reportedly triggered by firecrackers igniting couches on the stilt floor, was brought under control by 2.10 pm after 14 fire tenders were deployed. No casualties were officially reported, though residents claimed a few children sustained minor injuries and were taken to RML Hospital. Thick smoke engulfed the area **PHOTO: PTI** ***>>>More on Page 3***

Burnt voter rolls found near ex-BJP MLA's home in Aland

KALABURAGI, 18 OCT

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing alleged voter fraud in Aland constituency has uncovered a new twist, recovering partially burnt electoral records outside the residence of former BJP MLA Subhash Guttedar in Revanasiddeshwar Colony.

Superintendent of Police (CID) Shubhanvita and Deputy Superintendent of Police (DySP) Aslam Pasha rushed to the location and inspected the premises. Investigators later discovered bundles of half-burnt documents dumped into the Amarja River near Shakapura Bridge. The recovery operation, led by Inspector Sharangouda, continued into the night. DySP Tammanaraya Patil, Circle Police Inspector Prakash Yatanur and other officials have since camped at the site.

Earlier, SIT teams raided Guttedar's residence in Gubbi Colony and a bar he owns, seizing election-related documents and electronic devices. In a parallel raid at the home of one Akram near Hagaraga Cross, thousands of voter identity cards, 15 mobile phones, and seven laptops were confiscated.

At a press conference, Guttedar denied any wrongdoing and accused sitting Indian National Congress (INC) MLA BR Patil of levelling false charges to impress Member of Parliament (MP) Rahul Gandhi and secure a ministerial berth. He claimed the burnt papers were discarded by housekeeping staff during Deepavali cleaning.

"If I wanted to destroy evidence, would I do it in front of my house?" he asked, while asserting his willingness to fully cooperate with the investigation.

Congress leader RK Patil alleged that BJP members disposed of voter-related records in Shakhapur Lake to erase evidence. The SIT later recovered partially burnt documents from both the stream and the original burning site.

The SIT was constituted following Rahul Gandhi's allegations of widespread voter deletion in Aland during the 2023 Karnataka Legislative Assembly elections. *—Salar News*

Investigators later discovered bundles of half-burnt documents dumped into the Amarja River near Shakapura Bridge **PHOTO: SALAR**

JMM DITCHES INDIA, TO GO SOLO IN BIHAR

RANCHI, 18 OCT

The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) on Saturday announced it will contest the Bihar Assembly elections independently, signalling growing cracks within the INDIA bloc. The party will field candidates in six seats — Chakai, Dhamdaha, Katoria (ST), Manihari (ST), Jamui and Pirpainti (SC) —all going to polls in the second phase on 11 November.

JMM general secretary Supriyo Bhattacharya also said the party would "review" its alliance with the Congress and RJD in Jharkhand after the Bihar elections. The INDIA bloc, once projected as a united front against the NDA, now finds itself in disarray. With at least 10 "friendly contests" between RJD, Congress, and Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP) candidates, including in key seats like Vaishali, Tarapur, and Kutumba, the coalition risks internal sabotage. Delays in seat-sharing talks, confusion over candidate lists, and VIP chief Mukesh Sahani's last-minute withdrawal have further weakened the bloc. *—PTI*

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NO WHERE IS SAFE

Chain snatchers rob, chop fingers of 2 women in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, 18 OCT

Two women were brutally attacked in Bengaluru last month when bike-borne thieves stole gold jewellery worth around Rs 7 lakh, police said. CCTV footage of the 13 September incident in Girinagar shows one of the accused slashing two fingers of a woman who tried to resist, highlighting the violence of the crime.

The victims, Usha and Varalakshmi, were returning from a Ganesha festival orchestra when Praveen and Yogananda intercepted them near Eashwari Nagar. The assailants, wielding a machete, forced Usha to hand over her gold chain. When Varalakshmi resisted, Yogananda severed two of her fingers before snatching her gold chain. The duo fled with 10 grams of Usha's jewellery and 45 grams from Varalakshmi, valued at approximately Rs 7 lakh.

Following the attack, Girinagar police registered a case under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and launched a manhunt. Investigators discovered Yogananda, who had a prior criminal record including a murder case, had fled to Puducherry, Mumbai, and Goa, spending the stolen money before returning to Marasinganahalli.

After nearly a month, police arrested him in Maddur, recovering 74 grams of gold and the machete used in the assault. Praveen remains at large. Authorities confirmed further investigation is ongoing to apprehend the second accused and trace any accomplices. *—Agencies*

India will not be buying Russian oil: Trump says again

WASHINGTON, 18 OCT

US President Donald Trump has claimed that India has "more or less stopped" purchasing Russian oil, saying New Delhi has "de-escalated" and will no longer buy the 38% share it previously sourced from Moscow. His remarks came while addressing the media alongside Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Trump also reiterated that Pakistani PM Shehbaz Sharif credited him with mediating a ceasefire between India and Pakistan after recent hostilities. India maintains the ceasefire followed direct military talks post-Operation Sindoor. Responding to US pressure and tariffs, India reaffirmed its right to independently diversify energy sources. *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 5 & 6

DHANTERAS RUSH

Women buy jewellery at a showroom, in Thane, as Dhanteras marks the start of Deepavali festivities. Celebrated over two days until 1.45 pm on Sunday, Dhanteras is considered an auspicious day to purchase gold, silver, and utensils. This year saw a 35–40 per cent surge in silver coin sales despite a 40 per cent price hike. Gold, however, witnessed slower movement, priced at Rs 1.32 lakh per 10g, up 63 per cent year-on-year, with jewellers reporting an expected 15 per cent drop in volume. Stores remained open till midnight to meet festive demand **PHOTO: PTI** ***>>>More on Page 7***

Chamarajanagar PO suspended after employee's suicide

CHAMARAJANAGAR, 18 OCT

Ramegowda KN, the In-Charge Panchayat Development Officer of Honganur Gram Panchayat in Chamarajanagar district, has been suspended following the tragic suicide of a former employee, Chikkusanayaka. The deceased, who had worked as a waterman, was found hanging in the Panchayat building. In his death note, he cited the non-payment of his honorarium for approximately 27 months and alleged harassment by Ramegowda and the husband of the Gram Panchayat Chairperson. An FIR was filed at Chamarajanagar East Police Station under the IPC and the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. An inquiry by the authorities revealed that Ramegowda had neglected his duties. He has been barred from leaving the workplace without permission and will receive subsistence allowance during his suspension. *—Salar News with agencies*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

PHOTO: PTI

Mangaluru man dies by suicide over 'honeytrap'

MANGALURU, 18 OCT

A 26-year-old man employed at a hospital allegedly died by suicide after leaving behind a note accusing four people of blackmailing and harassing him using a private video, police said on Saturday. The deceased, Abhishek, a resident of Parpady in Nitte, in Udupi district, reportedly named four individuals — Nireeksha, Rahul, Rakesh, and Taslim — in his note, alleging that they subjected him to severe mental and physical harassment for money and even threatened to kill him. Police said an investigation is underway based on the contents of the death note. Preliminary findings suggest the victim was distressed over continuous threats and extortion attempts. *—PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

Mysuru Cong conducts vote chori sign campaign

MYSURU, 18 OCT

Mysuru District and City Congress activists actively took part in the vote chori signature collection campaign held at Gandhi square in the city.

Hundreds of activists took part in the event organised as part the All India Congress Committee's 'vote theft' campaign. The Congress activists will send the book that was collected with signatures to President Droupadi Murmu. At the event, KPCC Vice President V S Ugrappa launched a scathing attack on the Union Government while former MLC Marithibbegowda highlighted the issue of vote theft in the country, alleging that the BJP had come to power for the third time through it. *—Salar News*

DKS bats for zone-wise tax use in GBA

Govt to meet with IT companies about grievances as DyCM lauds Bengaluru East area

BENGALURU, 18 OCT

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar suggested that the taxes collected under one corporation of the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) should be used for the same zone.

"Setting up five new corporations is a historic decision," he said on Saturday during the Bengaluru Nadige (Walk for Bengaluru) in the KR Puram area. "We are collecting taxes worth Rs 6,000 crore from the City of which Bengaluru East has a share of Rs 1,600 crore. The taxes that the respective corporation collects must now be used in the same zone."

"Bengaluru East corporation is a very resourceful corporation and the proceeds will be used to fix the civic issues here. Earlier the amount collected here was used in other parts of the City too. We have taken many steps to expedite works," he said. "We have created a separate corporation to ensure that the tax collection from the specific area is spent on the same area."

Noting the budget allocation, he said, "The Council of the corporation can spend up to Rs 10 crore without tenders and the Commissioner Rs 3 crore without tenders."

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar interacts with the citizens at KR Puram in City on Saturday as part of the Bengaluru Nadige 'Walk for Bengaluru' PHOTO: SALAR

Reacting to criticism about the condition of the City's infrastructure and roads, he said the government would meet IT-BT companies next week to listen to their grievances. Prominent figures such as Biocon Chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw have recently been publicly criticised the City's infrastructure.

"Next week, the IT Minister (Priyank Kharge) and I will hold separate meetings with IT-BT companies," Shivakumar said. "Our work is the answer to those who criticise. We are focused on our work and are not bothered about unwarranted criticism."

"We're also planning a comprehensive market redevelopment strategy," he added.

Shivakumar said that many buildings in the KR Pura constituency will be demolished soon.

"There are a lot of encroachment cases in KR Puram area and many illegal buildings have been constructed. As per the Supreme Court order, they will be demolished. We have exempted sites up to 30x40 from OC and CC but we will not allow construction without set-backs," he said.

He added that the KR Puram Santhe (fair) may be shifted soon, because it was causing traffic jams.

He said that the government was envisioning transforming the KR Puram Market into a "model market".

Shivakumar also instructed officials to take action against KR Pura Revenue Officer for demanding bribe to issue khata. *—Salar News*

> **If (Biocon Chairperson Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw) wants to develop them (roads), let her do it. If she comes and asks, we will give her the roads**
>
> -DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

KEY ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Govt to demolish 'illegal' buildings in KR Puram
- KR Puram Santhe (fair) may be shifted soon for causing traffic jams
- Govt planning 'market redevelopment strategy'
- The proposed tunnel road would be connected to Metro Rail, flyovers, and national highways.

RSS material removed in Kalaburagi

KALABURAGI, 18 OCT

The State BJP on Saturday lashed out at Minister Priyank Kharge over the removal of RSS' publicity material in Chittapur taluk in Kalaburagi district ahead of a major event. The Congress leader, however, alleged the saffron organisation had not taken permission for the programme.

The RSS had scheduled its 'Patha Sanchalana,' a route march seen as its show of strength and came at a time when the Congress government has decided to implement rules on holding of events in public places and government spaces. The move is seen as one aimed apparently at checking the RSS, with Kharge himself flagging the need for such restrictions with the Chief Minister a few days ago.

On Saturday, RSS flags, flex, banners and posters in Chittapur Taluk were removed. Kharge, the IT/BT minister, represents the Chittapur Assembly constituency.

The RSS had scheduled a 'Patha Sanchalana' (march in Kalaburagi), but had allegedly not got government permission PHOTO: X

BJP leader R Ashoka posted on X, "Is Chittapur in India or is it the Republic of the Kharge family?"

"Have (RSS) they taken permission for it?" Kharge responded. He said he was also fined for putting up posters and banners without permission from the authorities. "The information I have is that they have just given intimation about their event but they have not taken permission. Is the RSS flag the national flag?"

He also claimed that a BJP functionary threatened him saying that RSS volunteers will enter his house and beat him up.

"I am going to lodge a complaint with the Director General of Police," Kharge said.

However, Ashoka, the State Leader of Opposition said permission letter was obtained from the municipality and an Advertisement tax was paid to the municipality and a receipt has been obtained.

TEJASVI TO FIGHT FOR PDO SUSPENDED FOR RSS TIES

Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya vowed to fight in court for the Panchayat Development Officer (PDO) who was suspended after a video showed the latter taking part in a RSS event. The Raichur PDO was suspended on Friday. "I have spoken to the officer suspended for taking part in RSS Pathsanchalan by the State Government," Surya said in a statement.

"Assured him that I will personally appear before the concerned tribunal and courts to challenge this illegal and unlawful suspension. There are multiple judgements from across High Courts which have upheld government servants' right to participate in RSS programmes," he added.

—Salar News with agencies

EVER READY

The Quick Response Team (QRT) ride 50 newly donated vehicles, supported by Honda India Foundation, in front of Vidhana Soudha in City on Saturday. The Traffic Police also launched a new 'E-Accident Report' feature on the BTP ASTraM App, which allows citizens to digitally report traffic accidents PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD

Rajanna questions enforceability of RSS event ban

TUMAKURU, 18 OCT

Ruling Congress MLA KN Rajanna on Saturday expressed doubts over the success of banning RSS activities in public places and government schools and colleges.

He sought to know whether the government would require Muslims to get permission for performing 'namaz' (prayers) on roads.

The MLA, who was sacked from the ministerial post a few months ago, said only those rules which can be implemented, should be made.

Rajanna clarified that Minister Priyank Kharge has only stated that the RSS can hold its event in public places after obtaining permission but never suggested a total ban.

"We have to see to what extent it can be implemented," the MLA said.

"Now, we have Idgah. They (Muslims) offer Namaz on the road only. Do they take permission? Or will they listen if they are told to get permission first?" Rajanna said. He said only laws which can be implemented should be implimented. *—PTI*

CJI SHOE THROWING INCIDENT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah at the Silver Jubilee celebration of Mysore University, on Saturday PHOTO: X @SIDDARAMAIAH

Avoid sanatanis, be wary of RSS: CM

MYSURU/ BELAGAVI 18 OCT

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Saturday urged people to avoid the company of 'sanatanis' and remain cautious of the RSS and Sangh Parivar, saying they had historically opposed BR Ambedkar and the Constitution he framed.

"Keep your company right. Associate with those who stand for society, not with those who oppose social change or with 'sanatanis'," Siddaramaiah said after inaugurating the silver jubilee celebrations of Mysore University and dedicating the new Jnana Darshana building.

Referring to the recent incident in which a shoe was hurled at Chief Justice of India BR Gavai, the Siddaramaiah said, "The fact that a 'sanatani' threw a shoe at the Chief Justice shows that 'sanatanis' and orthodox elements still exist in society. This act should be condemned not just by Dalits but by everyone."

Siddaramaiah also said that the RSS and Sangh Parivar had opposed Ambedkar's Constitution and continue to do so. Speaking about the Ambedkar School of Economics, he said, "Another Ambedkar will never be born, but everyone should follow his ideals and walk in his footsteps."

> **Journalists should think about what benefit sensational news brings to society... The media is not doing the work of realistically presenting the social system before the people. Due to keeping the Shudra community away... inequality has grown**
>
> -Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

'NO PROPOSAL TO BAN RSS'

Speaking to reporters at the Belagavi Guest House, Law Minister HK Patil clarified that the State government has no proposal or plan to impose a ban on the RSS or any other organisation.

BELAGAVI BLACK DAY

Referring to Karnataka Rajyotsava on 1 November—the day marking the formation of the unified Karnataka — Patil urged people of all languages, castes, and communities to celebrate the occasion together with enthusiasm. He appealed to members of the pro-Maharashtra Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES) also to participate in the celebrations. The Minister warned that observing the day as a "Black Day," as done in some Marathi-speaking areas such as Belagavi, was unacceptable.

—Salar news with Agencies

Govt adds 422 PG medical seats as Deepavali gift

BENGALURU, 18 OCT

An additional 422 postgraduate (PG) medical seats have been sanctioned in government medical colleges for the academic year 2025–26, said Dr Sharanprakash R Patil, Minister for Medical Education, Skill Development, Livelihood.

Speaking at a press conference held at Vikas Soudha on Saturday, the minister said the increase covers pre-clinical, para-clinical, and clinical disciplines.

PG seats have been sanctioned in over 20 departments, including Pediatrics, Anesthesiology, Forensic Medicine, and Microbiology

"As in previous years, there was a strong demand for PG courses this year as well. We had requested approval for 572 seats, of which 422 have been granted. Last year, there were 1,694 PG seats; with this year's addition, the total will rise to 2,116 seats. This is truly a Diwali gift for students," Dr Patil said.

The Raichur district-incharge minister termed it the State's has received its Deepavali cheer. Dr Patil also reaffirmed the State government's commitment to high-quality higher education. *—Salar News*

'WON'T BE THREATENED'

DKS meets contractors amid strike threat

BENGALURU, 18 OCT

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar met members of the Karnataka State Contractors Association (KSCA) at his Kumara Park Government Residence on Saturday and held discussions. The KSCA members included President Manjunath, General Secretary Ravindra and others.

On Friday, the KSCA had threatened to go on strike if the pending dues of Rs 3,300 crore were not met by December.

Shivakumar had said before the meeting that he was not afraid of their threats and blamed the previous BJP government for the dues.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar met members of the Karnataka State Contractors Association on Saturday PHOTO: X @DKSHIVAKUMAR

"I am not scared of their threats," he had said. "The previous BJP government had tendered more projects than budgeted and hence the issue with clearance of payments. We are trying to clear their bills in a phased manner."

However, Opposition Leader, R Ashoka, claimed that the State was "bankrupt".

Ashoka wrote on X: "(Congress leader) Rahul Gandhi, is this your 'Karnataka Model'? Under the corrupt and exploitative ATM Sarkara, Karnataka has gone bankrupt... Every department is choking because Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar have squeezed the coffers dry to save their chairs and fund their political games." *—Salar News*

Rowdy-sheeter shot dead by cops

VIJAYAPURA, 18 OCT

A 35-year-old notorious rowdy-sheeter was shot dead by police near Rampur village in Sindagi taluk on Saturday after allegedly attacking officers with a knife while resisting arrest.

Yunus Patel was wanted in 12 criminal cases including two murders and one attempt-to-murder and had a 17 Oct robbery.

When officers moved to arrest him in Rampur, Patel reportedly attacked two constables. In self-defence, the inspector first fired a warning shot and, as Patel continued his assault, shot him in the leg. He was taken to hospitals but later died. *—Salar News*

Andhra Minister begins Aus tour for investments

AMARAVATI, 18 OCT

Andhra Pradesh IT Minister Nara Lokesh on Saturday began a seven-day visit to Australia under the 'Special Visitors Program' to promote the state as a key investment hub. Calling it a "learning and partnership tour," Lokesh said he would meet university leaders, top CEOs, and skills ministers to create education and employment opportunities for Andhra's youth. The TDP general secretary will also hold talks with the Australian Seafood Association to help state exporters access new global markets following U.S. tariffs. Lokesh posted on X that any resulting partnerships would be the "best festive gift" for the people. He is also expected to meet the Australian Telugu community and lead a roadshow. *—PTI*

CPI(M) councillor held for snatching gold chain in Kerala

KANNUR, 18 OCT

A CPI(M) councillor, PP Rajesh, has been arrested for allegedly snatching a gold chain from a 77-year-old woman, Janaki, after unlawfully entering her home in Koothuparamba, Kerala. The incident occurred while Janaki was alone, with the assailant, wearing a helmet, reportedly bursting into her kitchen, grabbing her chain, and fleeing the scene. Neighbours came to her aid after hearing her screams, but the suspect escaped. Police traced the vehicle used in the crime via CCTV footage, leading to Rajesh's arrest. CPI (M) expelled him from the party for "actions that tarnished its reputation," according to a statement from the district leadership. Rajesh will be presented in court following legal procedures. *—PTI*

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

AAP's J&K MLA Malik to vote in RS polls from jail

JAMMU, 18 OCT

The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh has directed the government to ensure detained AAP MLA Mehraj Malik can vote in the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections. Malik, lodged in Kathua jail under the Public Safety Act, applied for permission to participate in the polls next Thursday. Senior Additional Advocate General Monika Kohli informed the court that postal ballots had been dispatched to the jail. Malik's identity will be verified through a declaration signed by the jail superintendent, allowing him to cast his three votes under the law. The four-seat election features four candidates from the National Conference and three from the BJP. An AAP spokesperson confirmed the court order, emphasising the party's MLA has legal right to vote as a detained legislator. *—PTI*

'Dupki' cast absent at Beijing premier after visa denial

BEIGING, 18 OCT

Indian comedy film Dupki premiered at the sixth Beijing International Children's Festival without its director and cast after their visa applications were rejected. Directed by Abhay Punjabi, the film follows the summer adventures of three children from diverse backgrounds in Delhi. Punjabi, formerly associated with the Film and Television Institute, confirmed that despite an official invitation, the Chinese Embassy in Delhi denied his visa without explanation. Festival official Gavin Lee expressed regret over the absence of the filmmakers. Dupki was screened as part of the four-day event featuring 62 films. Produced by Amit and Ritu Garg, the Hindi-language comedy was made on a budget of around Rs 2.5 crore. *—PTI*

JMM to contest Bihar polls independently

Impasse in INDIA block continues, no seat deal reached yet as Cong, RJD fight for seats

RANCHI, 18 OCT

The JMM on Saturday announced that it will contest the Bihar assembly polls independently, and said the party would "review" its alliance with the Congress and RJD in Jharkhand after the elections in the neighbouring state.

JMM general secretary Supriyo Bhattacharya said the party will field candidates in six seats in Bihar - Chakai, Dhamdaha, Katoria (ST), Manihari (ST), Jamui and Pirpainti (SC)

These seats will go to polls in the second phase on 11 November.

The JMM had communicated to INDIA bloc leaders that the party would take its own decision on contesting the Bihar polls, if "a respectful number of seats" was not allocated to it. The JMM had demanded 12 seats for the polls as an ally of the coalition.

In 2024 Jharkhand polls, JMM gave six seats to the RJD and accommodated an MLA as minister.

Bhattacharya also said the battle of Bihar is a multi-corner fight where "infighting prevails in the NDA as well as the INDIA bloc".

"We will fight, win and make sure that without the JMM, no government is formed in Bihar," he asserted.

The party also declared a list of 20 "star campaigners" for the elections, which will be led by its president and Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren.

The other star campaigners include the CM's wife and Gandey MLA, Kalpana Soren, Dumka legislator Basant Soren, senior party leaders Stephen Marandi and Sarfaraj Ahmed.

Meanwhile, the CPI(ML) Liberation, a constituent of the INDIA bloc in Bihar also released its list of 20 candidates for the upcoming polls, renominating all its 12 sitting MLAs. It fielded new faces in several seats. *—PTI*

JJM general secratary Supriyo Bhattacharjee said candidates will be fielded in six seats *PHOTO: ANI*

- The JMM had communicated to INDIA bloc leaders that the party would take its own decision on contesting the Bihar polls, if "a respectful number of seats" was not allocated to it.

Bihar voters to get paid holidays

The Election Commission has declared that all voters in Bihar, where elections will be held next month, are entitled to a paid holiday on polling days under Section 135B of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. Employers in businesses and industrial establishments who fail to comply, including not deducting wages, face fines. Daily wage and casual workers, even if employed outside their constituency, are covered. The EC has urged strict adherence to ensure all eligible voters can exercise their franchise without hindrance. *—PTI*

Don't trust 'jungle raj in new mask': Shah on INDIA

PATNA, 18 OCT

Union Home Minister Amit Shah concluded a three-day visit to Bihar, advocating for the NDA's continuation in power and condemning the RJD-led INDIA bloc, which he described as "jungle raj wearing a new mask." At the 'Bihar Samagam' conclave, co-hosted by ABP News and Hindustan, Shah urged voters to trust the NDA, highlighting the development under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar.

"I plead with the people not to trust those who would bring back jungle raj," Shah stated, reflecting on past social issues. He dismissed claims of the NDA announcing freebies out of electoral desperation, asserting that the opposition's turmoil was causing concern. Shah highlighted various welfare measures, including food support for 8.52 crore people and housing for 44 lakh individuals, as signs of the NDA's commitment to Bihar's progress. Addressing immigration concerns, Shah said, "While infiltration has stopped in Assam, it continues in West Bengal." *—PTI*

> **Yogi Adityanath has gone to Bihar not as a star campaigner but as a star divider. The people of Bihar will not accept him. People can never accept communal figures**
>
> -Akhilesh Yadav, SP leader

We only wanted to contest from those places where we had a strong presence. I am thankful to the BJP and the JD(U). Both have shown a big heart in the NDA seat-sharing arrangement

-Chirag Paswan, Union Minister

Didi seeks revocation of Gorkha interlocutor

KOLKATA, 18 OCT

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has expressed her "surprise and shock" at the appointment of a retired IPS officer as interlocutor to discuss Gorkha issues, demanding its immediate revocation in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Banerjee asserted that her government was not consulted regarding the appointment of Pankaj Kumar Singh, which she described as "inconsistent with the spirit of cooperative federalism". She stated, "This appointment has been made without any consultation with the Government of West Bengal, even though the issues under reference directly relate to the governance, peace, and the administrative stability of the area under the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA)."

The Chief Minister emphasised that any initiatives related to the Gorkha community must involve the West Bengal government to ensure sustained peace. She remarked, "The GTA was constituted following a Tripartite Agreement on 18 July, 2011...to ensure socio-economic and cultural developments while safeguarding the ethnic identity of the Gorkhas."

Banerjee highlighted the successful maintenance of peace in the hill districts since her government took power in 2011 and insisted that any unilateral actions would jeopardise this harmony. The Chief Minister concluded her letter, urging the Prime Minister to re-consider. *—PTI*

Will not ally with BJP for statehood: Omar

SRINAGAR, 18 OCT

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Saturday asserted he will not ally with the BJP to hasten the restoration of statehood to the Union Territory, saying his party has no intention of repeating the "mistakes" committed by others in the past.

The chief minister is exploring the possibility of becoming a party to the plea for the restoration of statehood in the Supreme Court.

The SC on 10 October gave the Centre four weeks to file its response to the pleas on the issue.

Abdullah said if the restoration of statehood is dependent on the BJP coming to power in the state, then the national party should be honest in saying so..

Abdullah said that Pahalgam was being linked to restoration of statehood and people here condemned the terror strike.

Highlighting the "confusion" in the dual system of governance in a UT, Abdullah said he had appointed an advocate general within days of assuming office as the post is the legal face of the government.

On the recent crisis in Ladakh, he said it was unfortunate as promises were made to the people there but "not kept".

Abdullah said if promises are made, they should be kept as well.

The NC leader also raised the issue of different domicile yardsticks in Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir.

Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday promised restoration of statehood for Jammu and Kashmir at "an appropriate time" and a "good resolution" of the demands. *—PTI*

Jammu and Kashmir Cm Omar Abdullah with Union Minister Amit Shah duirng a meeting in Delhi *PHOTO: ANI*

- The SC on 10 October gave the Centre four weeks to file its response to the pleas on the issue. Abdullah said if the restoration of statehood is dependent on the BJP coming to power in the state, then the national party should be honest in saying so.

Mahayuti MLC alleges duplication of 36K voters

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 18 OCT

NCP MLC Satish Chavan has called for the postponement of upcoming local body elections in Maharashtra, citing concerns over voter duplication on electoral rolls. He alleged that 36,000 names, including those of deceased individuals and some residing at non-existent addresses, appear multiple times on the voters' list for the Gangapur assembly seat.

"This is being done deliberately, and action should be taken against the booth level officers (BLOs)," Chavan stated at a press conference. He proposed delaying elections by three to four months to rectify the discrepancies. He highlighted particular issues in the Ranjangaon Shenpunji area, alleging the presence of more than 4,000 bogus voters

Meanwhile, election officials in Maharashtra will temporarily mark names that appear multiple times in electoral rolls and seek clarification from the individuals concerned on their preferred constituency for future voting. The updated voter list will be shared with booth-level officers and political party representatives. *—PTI*

Delhi's Deepavali will be different under 'sanatani' govt, says Rekha

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

- The CM said that under a "Sanatani" government, the festival's divinity and grandeur in the national capital will be distinctly enhanced.

Chief Minister **Rekha Gupta** said that Deepavali in Delhi will be celebrated differently this year under a "Sanatani" government. She made the remarks at the Deepavali Milan programme held at the BJP's newly inaugurated office on DDU Marg.

The event was attended by Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva, Union minister Harsh Malhotra, Delhi Assembly speaker Vijender Gupta, BJP MPs Manoj Tiwari, Bansuri Swaraj and Yogender Chandolia, as well as Delhi cabinet ministers Ashish Sood and Manjinder Singh Sirsa.

The CM said that under a "Sanatani" government, the festival's divinity and grandeur in the national capital will be distinctly enhanced. She highlighted steps taken by her administration, including cleaning the Yamuna, speeding up GST refunds, and lifting the ban on green crackers.

She also greeted citizens on the occasion and invited them to participate in the 'Deepotsav' at Kartavya Path later on Saturday evening, where 1.5 lakh earthen diyas will be lit.

The Deepavali function was the first held at the BJP's new office, with the party expected to move there around Devothani Ekadashi from Pant Marg. *—PTI*

Maoist leader urges cadres to surrender

GARIABAND, 18 OCT

In response to a surge in mass surrenders in Chhattisgarh's Naxal strongholds, a senior Maoist leader has issued a letter appealing for cadres to lay down their arms and reintegrate into society, attributing the group's disintegration to vigorous actions by security forces.

The letter, attributed to Maoist leader Sunil of the Udanti Area Committee, acknowledges the surrender of notable commander Sonu Dada (Mallojula Venugopal Rao alias Bhupathi) and 60 cadres in Gadchiroli. It noted that armed struggle was now unviable "due to growing pressure," citing organisational failures. *—PTI*

CAUSED BY CRACKERS

Flats housing MPs in Delhi catch fire

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

A major fire broke out on Saturday afternoon at Brahmaputra Apartments on Baba Kharag Singh Marg, opposite Delhi's Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital. The complex houses residences of several Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs.

While Delhi Fire Services (DFS) reported no confirmed casualties, residents claimed a few children were injured and taken to RML Hospital.

The fire was reported at 1.22pm, prompting the deployment of 14 fire tenders. The blaze was brought under control by 2.10pm. Thick black smoke was seen billowing from the building, casting a dark haze over the surrounding area.

Residents suggested the fire began on the stilt floor after sofas caught fire, allegedly due to the bursting of firecrackers. "From what I have heard, the fire began after some sofas caught fire. All our belongings, documents, jewellery, clothes, and essentials have been destroyed. The only thing left are the clothes on our backs," said Kamal, personal assistant to an Uttarakhand MP.

Anil Kumar, another resident, added: "Two girls were rushed to hospital, and several staff members' belongings were destroyed. The fire spread rapidly from the lower floors to the upper levels, though the DFS response limited the damage above the stilt floor."

Purnima, another resident, highlighted safety concerns: "Most of the lower floors are completely burnt, and the fire even reached the fourth floor, where MPs' flats begin. This is an area meant for MPs; such incidents should not be happening here." Residents have urged Chief Minister Rekha Gupta to review the building's safety and provide temporary accommodation for staff.

The fire originated in stored household items on the stilt floor.

Delhi Police are investigating the exact cause. *—PTI*

Flames rise after a fire broke out at Brahmaputra Apartments in New Delhi on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

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Telangana CM Revanth Reddy made the announcentment of pay cuts while distributing appointment letters to new government employees *PHOTO: X*

T'GANA TO DEDUCT SALARY OF GOVT WORKERS FOR NEGLECTING PARENTS

HYDERABAD, 18 OCT

The Telangana government is set to introduce legislation that would see a salary deduction of 10 to 15 per cent for government employees who neglect their parents. Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy announced the proposal during an event where he distributed appointment letters to newly selected Group-II employees.

"We are bringing a law. If a government employee neglects his or her parents, 10 to 15 per cent of the salary will be deducted and deposited into the parents' bank account," Reddy stated. "You will be the ones to draft the legislation. Just as you receive a monthly salary, we will ensure that your parents also receive a monthly income from it."

Reddy instructed Chief Secretary Ramakrishna Rao to establish a committee of officials tasked with drafting the bill.

The initiative aims to encourage compassion and a sense of responsibility among government employees towards their parents. *—PTI*

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

9 held for violence in Assam over Zubeen's death

GUWAHATI, 18 OCT

Nine people have been arrested over violent protests near Baksa jail in Assam during the transfer of accused in singer Zubeen Garg's death case, police said on Saturday. Several others involved were identified, and searches are on to nab them. The violence left several people, including police and media personnel, injured and led to suspension of internet services in the district. A WhatsApp group was found where discussions centred around creating unrest. Aman from Nagaon was also arrested for posting an inflammatory social media video about Garg's death. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the accused edited an OTT clip to spread provocative content. Prohibitory orders remain in force in Mushalpur. *—PTI*

Techie death: Cops file sexual harassment case

T'PURAM, 18 OCT

Thiruvananthapuram police have registered a case against Nidheesh Muralidharan, accused of sexually harassing 26-year-old RSS worker Anandu Aji, who died by suicide on 9 October. Thampanoor police booked Muralidharan, a family friend, under IPC Section 377 after Aji left a 15-page suicide note and a video alleging repeated sexual abuse since childhood, causing severe mental distress. The case has been transferred to Ponkunnam police in Kottayam, where the alleged offence occurred, for re-registration and investigation. Aji, a software engineer, also claimed harassment during RSS camps. The RSS dismissed the allegations as "dubious and baseless," while Youth Congress and other groups demanded a comprehensive probe into the circumstances surrounding his death. *—PTI*

Aurangabad rly station renamed after Sambhaji

C'SAMBHAJINAGAR, 18 OCT

The Aurangabad railway station in Maharashtra has been officially renamed Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar station following a gazette notification issued by the state government on 15 October. The move comes nearly three years after the city itself was rechristened in 2022 to honour Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's son, Sambhaji. Earlier named after Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, the historic station was opened in 1900 by the 7th Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Osman Ali Khan. Located on the Kacheguda–Manmad section under the South Central Railway, the station is a key stop connecting major cities. Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar iis home to UNESCO World Heritage Sites such as the Ajanta and Ellora Caves. *—PTI*

T'gana cop killed by accused on way to police station

HYDERABAD, 18OCT

A 42-year-old police constable was stabbed to death by a habitual offender in Nizamabad, Telangana, on the night of 17 October. Constable E Pramod, attached to the Central Crime Station, was escorting 24-year-old suspect Shaik Riyaz to the police station on a motorbike when the accused attacked him with a knife and fled. A Sub-Inspector following them sustained minor injuries. Telangana DGP B Shivadhar Reddy expressed grief and ordered the formation of eight special teams to capture Riyaz, who is wanted in other cases. The police said it was unfortunate that locals and auto-rickshaw drivers failed to help the wounded officer. A cash reward of Rs 50,000 was announced for information on Riyaz. *—PTI*

March in Leh for statehood foiled

Security imposed, mobile internet suspended

LEH, 18 OCT

A planned silent march, jointly called by Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) as part of their agitation for statehood and safeguards under sixth schedule of the constitution, was thwarted here on Saturday as authorities imposed strict security measures and suspended mobile internet.

However, Kargil witnessed a peaceful silent march with KDA leaders condemning the restrictions in Leh, but welcomed the announcement of a judicial probe into the 24 September firing incident that left several people dead and many others injured.

Police and paramilitary forces were deployed in Leh and adjoining areas amid a call by LAB and KDA for a two-hour silent march and three-hour black out across Ladakh to express solidarity with those who lost their lives, were injured or unlawfully detained.

Educational institutions also remained close.

Anjuman Imamia president and a member of LAB Ashraf Ali Barcha said the government should hold talks with the people rather than employing such curbs to browbeat them.

The Leh Apex Body and Karhil Democratic Alliance held the march in support of those who lost their lives in the recent violence *PHOTO: PTI*

Anjuman Moin ul Islam chief Abdul Qayoom claimed that the co-chairman of the LAB, Chering Dorjay, was also put under house arrest, appealing people not to make any attempt to reach the venue of the march in view of the stringent security measures.

In Kargil, hundreds of people led by KDA leaders, including and Sajjad Kargili, held a peaceful march from Hussaini Park to the main bus stand.

The participants were wearing black bands and carrying placards reiterating their demand for statehood and safeguards under sixth schedule.

Welcoming the judicial probe, they demanded the government to release all detained persons and adequate compensation for the families of those killed in the violence.

KDA also condemned the government for imposing curbs placed on the people in Leh. *—PTI*

FOR ROAD WIDENING

SC allows demolition of 400-yr-old Gujarat mosque

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

The Supreme Court on Friday upheld the Gujarat high court's decision allowing the partial demolition of the 400-year-old Mancha Masjid complex in Gujarat's Ahmedabad to facilitate a road-widening project, stating that the action was driven by public interest and not a disrespect to religious freedom.

Only a portion of the vacant land and a platform adjacent to the mosque were being cleared, while the mosque structure would remain intact. A commercial establishment and a residential property will also be demolished as part of the project.

The counsel for the Mancha Masjid Trust, argued that the municipal authorities' order did not refer to any bona fide public interest and was therefore arbitrary. She contended that the mosque, registered under the Mancha Masjid Trust, is a protected waqf property and that the demolition order failed to consider an earlier high court order.

The court making it clear that the mosque structure would not be touched.

- A portion of the vacant land and a platform adjacent to the mosque were cleared, while the structure will remain.

The counsel argued that the mosque's significance warranted special protection.

The court, however, kept open the question of whether the property qualifies as a waqf property, saying that the issue could be determined in proceedings for the purpose of compensation.The order affirms the Gujarat High Court's order, which had refused to stay the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation's notice to vacate part of the mosque premises in Saraspur. The Moghul era mosqueis a vital structure in the city. *—Agencies*

'Airport officials should know detention laws'

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court of India emphasised the urgent need for airport agencies to train their officers on existing laws concerning the detention and arrest of international travellers.

This ruling arose from the case of Rocky Abraham, an NRI residing in Italy, who was detained at Delhi airport in January 2025 for allegedly carrying a deer horn, violating the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

After almost two weeks in custody, Abraham secured bail under stringent conditions. The Court clarified that the recovered item was a reindeer horn, which does not breach Indian wildlife laws. *—PTI*

T'gana bandh over BC quota hits normal life

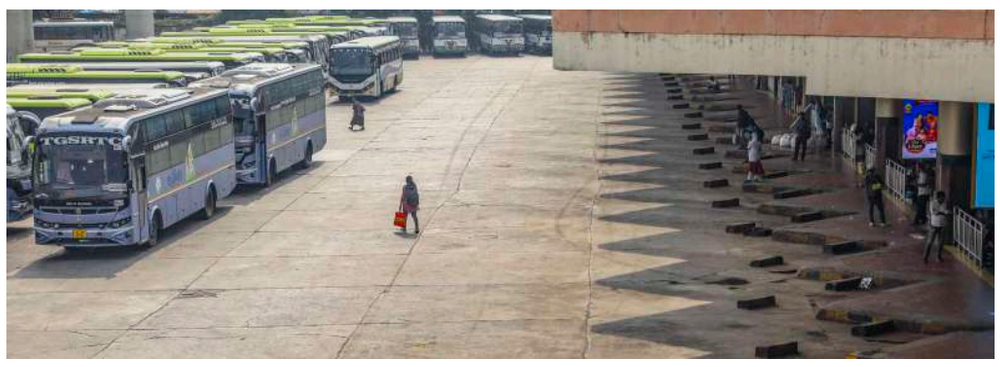
HYDERABAD, 18 OCT

A statewide bandh called by the BC JAC to protest against the High Court's stay order on 42 per cent quota to Backward Classes (BC) in local body polls began in Telangana on Saturday, with all political parties, including the ruling Congress supporting the agitation.

R Krishnaiah, chairman of Backward Communities Joint Action Committee and BJP Rajya Sabha member, had earlier sought support from all political parties and civil society organisations for the bandh.

Barring emergency and essential services, all the sectors were asked to remain closed.

The Telangana High Court earlier issued an interim stay against a government order providing 42 per cent BC reservation in local body elections.



A deserted bus terminal during a statewide 'bandh' called by Backward Classes (BC) Joint Action Committee (JAC) to protest against the Telangana High Court's stay on 42 per cent quota to BCs in local body polls *PHOTO: PTI*

Leaders of various political parties and BC organisations are holding dharnas in front of Telangana State Road Transport Corporation bus depots preventing vehicles from coming out.

BJP Lok Sabha member Etala Rajender participated in the bandh at Jubilee Bus Station here.

Telangana Jagruthi founder Kalvakuntla Kavitha said that it was the government's failure to convince the courts to rule in favour of reservations.

The police asked organisations to maintain peace. *—PTI*

HIJAB ROW: GOVT TO FACILITATE GIRL'S ADMISSION IN NEW SCHOOL

T'PURAM, 18 OCT

Kerala's General Education Minister V Sivankutty has pledged government support for a Muslim girl barred from wearing a hijab at a Church-run private school in Kochi.

The Minister stated that if the student approaches the government, a special order will be issued to facilitate her admission to another institution of her choice.

Sivankutty commented, "No student should miss an opportunity for studies due to lack of admission," adding that the school management is responsible for any mental distress experienced by the girl. Her father recently stated that she would not return to the school, saying, "My daughter has been under severe stress...we decided to respect her wishes."

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) backed the Minister, with PK Kunhalikutty calling the school's actions "utmost intolerance." The incident has drawn widespread attention, prompting calls for a reevaluation of the school's dress code policy. *—PTI*

A Consular Officer from the Indian Commission vists an Indian man undergoing treatment at a hospital in Beira after being rescued *PHOTO: ANI*

3 Indians dead, 5 missing in Mozambique boat accident

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

At least three Indian nationals have died, and five others are missing after a launch boat carrying 14 crew members capsized during a crew transfer operation off Beira port in central Mozambique on 17 October.

The Indian High Commission in Mozambique confirmed the incident, saying the vessel overturned under yet-to-be-determined circumstances while ferrying crew to a tanker anchored offshore.

Five Indian nationals were rescued, with one receiving medical treatment at a hospital in Beira. A Consular Officer from the Indian Mission has visited the injured survivor. In posts on X (formerly Twitter), the High Commission expressed its condolences to the families of those who lost their lives and assured full assistance.

Search and rescue operations are continuing, with local authorities, maritime agencies, and the Indian Mission jointly coordinating efforts to locate the five missing crew members. *—Agencies*

PEOPLE EVACUATED

Heavy rain lashes TN; Kerala dams release excess water

CHENNAI, 18 OCT

Heavy rain lashed several parts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala on Saturday as the Northeast Monsoon gained strength.

Southern Tamil Nadu districts such as Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Tenkasi, and Tuticorin experienced intense downpours, while Chennai and nearby areas faced waterlogging following continuous showers since 17 October.

The Meteorological Department confirmed the monsoon's onset on 16 October and forecast moderate to heavy rainfall until 22 October due to a developing low-pressure area over the Southeast Arabian Sea and Lakshadweep region.

In Kerala, heavy rainfall led to rising water levels in Idukki's reservoirs, prompting the release of water from the Mullaperiyar, Kallar, and Malankara dams.

A parked traveller vehicle was washed away in a flash flood at Koottar in Kerala's Idduki district *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

The Mullaperiyar dam level crossed 138 ft, forcing officials to open shutters and discharge water downstream. Residents along the Periyar, Kallar, and Chinnar rivers were warned of possible flooding, while local authorities began evacuations. *—PTI*

Sabarimala Temple gets new priest

PATHANAMTHITTA, 18 OCT

Prasad ED from Thrissur was appointed as the new 'melsanthi' (chief priest) of the renowned Sabarimala Lord Ayyappa temple on Saturday, just weeks before the annual Mandalam-Makaravilakku pilgrimage season. Manu Namboothiri MG was selected as the melsanthi of the nearby Malikappuram shrine.

The selection occurred through a traditional draw after the morning prayer at the temple.

Expressing joy over his appointment, Prasad stated, "I am very happy. Words fail to express my happiness. I cannot ask for anything more." However, he also addressed the ongoing controversy surrounding alleged irregularities in the gold plating of the temple, saying, "We should always be vigilant... We land in trouble when we over-depend on others." The appointment coincided with the reinstallation of gold-plated copper plate *—PTI*

TO AVERT HEALTH CRISIS

'India needs new nutrition policies for teens'

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

India must treat adolescence as its "second window of growth" and invest urgently in nutrition, education and healthy food systems to avert a future health and productivity crisis, experts said at the 3rd International Conference on Public Health and Nutrition (ICPHN 2025) here this week.

The conference was organised by Sukarya, an NGO working on issues of maternal and child health and nutrition, gender equality and women's empowerment.

K Srinath Reddy, chancellor of the Public Health Foundation of India, said failure to address adolescent nutrition would "lock in inter-generational poverty and poor health outcomes."

Citing National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 data, which showed that 56 per cent of adolescent girls are anaemic and nearly one in four adolescents is under or overweight, Reddy warned that the "double burden" of malnutrition could undermine India's demographic dividend.

Experts say failiure to address adolescent nutrition will lock in inter-generational poverty and poor health outcomes *PHOTO: FREEPIK*

Deepika Nayar, senior health, nutrition and population specialist at the World Bank, said adolescent health is both a moral and economic imperative.

Dr Supreet Kaur from Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN) stressed that integrated strategies -- clear food labelling, waste reduction and fiscal incentives for nutritious produce are needed to reshape consumption behavior.

Preetu Mishra, nutrition specialist at UNICEF India, said India's adolescents are facing a "triple burden" of undernutrition, over-nutrition and micronutrient deficiencies

Shweta Khandelwal, vice president, Social and Economic Empowerment at IPE Global, emphasised that adolescent nutrition must begin long before pregnancy.

With 11 per cent of births in India still among adolescents, pre-conception care and awareness must be embedded in every maternal health programme.

National data shows plateauing height and rising obesity among adolescents. *—PTI*

M'rashtra gives Rs 3,258 cr aid for rain-hit farmers

MUMBAI, 18 OCT

The Maharashtra government has approved Rs 3,258 crore in financial assistance for farmers impacted by excessive rainfall and flooding across 23 districts, as announced by State Minister Makarand Jadhav Patil. Over the past two days, the government sanctioned a total of Rs 5,364 crore through various resolutions aimed at aiding farmers.

"Rs 3,258 crore has been sanctioned for 33.65 lakh farmers in rain and flood-affected districts," Patil stated in an official release. Earlier this week, the government had also approved Rs 1,356.30 crore to assist 21.66 lakh affected farmers.

Earlier this month, a compensation package of Rs 31,628 crore was announced, ensuring total assistance of Rs 48,000 per hectare. However, opposition parties have criticised the relief package, calling it "too meagre" to adequately support farmers in rebuilding their lives after the devastating impact of September's heavy rainfall and floods, which destroyed crops on 68.69 lakh hectares statewide. *—PTI*

SACRED RELICS OF BUDDHA

Over 90,000 devotees have visited the sacred relics of Lord Buddha at the Geden Sheddup Choikorling Monastery in Elista, Kalmykia. The relics, believed to be fragments of Buddha's bones housed in a gold casket, were brought from India's National Museum by a special IAF aircraft. Revered as a national treasure of India, the relics were temporarily enshrined in the main Buddhist monastery of Elista, also known as the 'Golden Abode of Shakyamuni Buddha

PHOTO: PTI

India, China hold ground as US targets Russian oil deals

Chinese President Xi Jinping, US President Donald Trump, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi ***PHOTO: PTI***

India and China continue to push back against US President Donald Trump's threats of secondary sanctions — penalties for doing business with a sanctioned country — over their continued purchases of Russian oil, which is a key revenue stream for Moscow's war in Ukraine.

Reacting to Wednesday's remarks by Trump that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had assured him that the country would stop buying Russian energy, New Delhi insisted its priority was "to safeguard the interests of Indian consumers in a volatile energy environment."

And after Trump said he would get China to follow suit, Beijing said on Thursday its Russian oil imports were "legitimate" and that it would not stand for "unilateral bullying" from the United States. China became the biggest importer of Russian oil in 2022.

India previously accused the West of hypocrisy, pointing out that the European Union continues to import Russian energy, despite having massively reduced its reliance on it since the war began.

New Delhi further noted that Washington had actively supported its oil purchases from Russia, which ramped up shortly after the Russian invasion, to help stabilize global oil prices.

India's oil purchases from Russia grew nearly 19-fold from 2021 to 2024, from 0.1 to 1.9 million barrels a day, while China's rose by 50 per cent to 2.4 million barrels a day.

Petras Katinas, a Lithuania-based energy analyst at the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA), told DW that India, Russia's second-largest oil buyer, had saved up to $33 billion in energy costs between 2022 and 2024 as Moscow offered large price cuts when the US and Europe cut their reliance on Russian oil and gas.

TRUMP'S TARIFFS THREAT ROILS MARKETS

Having already imposed a 25 per cent tariff on Indian imports, Trump issued an executive order in August, levying an additional 25 per cent tariff on the same goods, specifically due to India's purchases of Russian oil.

Indian media outlets reported that the levy could spike the country's oil bill by up to $11 billion.

Secondary sanctions would be another major blow to the Russian economy, already reeling from Western sanctions. With military spending now exceeding 6 per cent of GDP and real inflation estimated by some analysts at 15-20 per cent versus the official 9 per cent figure, Russia is burning through cash, putting serious pressure on its budget and arms factories.

For global markets, new sanctions could trigger a seismic shock in energy prices and trade flows reminiscent of 2022, when the oil price surged and Russia bypassed Western sanctions by striking discounted energy deals with two of the world's largest economies.

OIL PRICE SPIKE TO STOKE INFLATION

If Russia's 5 million barrels a day were suddenly removed from the oil market, analysts think oil prices could surge once again as affected countries scramble to source other supplies. Even with oil cartel OPEC recently increasing output, replacing such a large volume would be exceptionally difficult in the short term, given limited spare capacity and logistical constraints.

The US Federal Reserve has estimated that every $10 increase in crude adds about 0.2 percentage points to US inflation. India's central bank reached a similar conclusion.

In a worst-case scenario, if prices were to climb from the current $58 a barrel to $110-$120 per barrel, a roughly one percentage point inflation rise would drive up costs for consumers and businesses — especially in energy, transport and food.

INDIA SUFFERS, WHILE CHINA HOLDS LEVERAGE

With the world's two largest economies conducting over $580 billion of trade, China's sheer economic scale gives it bargaining power that India lacks.

China's chokehold on the supply of rare earth minerals — a persistent friction point in US-China relations — is clearly a lever Beijing is pulling to temper Trump's stance, as witnessed by new export controls announced last week.

With India lacking comparable leverage, Trump in August doubled down on New Delhi, saying the likely impact of his new sanctions on Russia and India would "take their dead economies down together."

Following Trump's remarks on Wednesday that New Delhi would cut reliance on Russian oil "within a short period of time," India's Foreign Ministry spokesman Randhir Jaiswal noted Thursday that Washington had shown interest in deepening energy cooperation and talks on that were underway.

INDIA'S OIL JACKPOT SHRINKS

India, meanwhile, is no longer reaping the same windfall from Russian oil as it did in 2022, when discounts ranged from $15 to $20 per barrel. That margin has now narrowed to around $5, according to Kpler's Ritolia.

Still, Indian refiners continue to buy. Imports hit an 11-month high in June at 2.08 million barrels per day, accounting for 44 per cent of India's total crude intake — a sharp rebound driven by hedging to offset the geopolitical tensions and price competitiveness.

Beyond the rhetoric, China's likely response seems guided by its earlier reaction to secondary sanctions. Chinese banks are increasingly refusing Russian transactions, even in yuan, forcing Moscow to rely on opaque intermediaries and third-country workarounds.

However, Beijing sees oil imports as a priority that is mostly shielded from political pressure, while India is seen as more likely to hedge: trimming purchases if pressured, but not abandoning discounted Russian crude entirely.

Ritolia speculated that India might "reduce" its Russian oil imports, but added: "I don't see us going down to zero anytime soon." *—PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Social media age limit: Is internet in its Victorian era?

A wave of proposed social media bans for young people has swept the globe recently, fuelled by mounting concern about the apparent harm the likes of TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat can cause to vulnerable minds.

Australia was the first to announce restrictions on people under 16 having a social media account. New Zealand may soon follow, and Denmark's prime minister recently declared her country would ban social media for under-15s, accusing mobile phones and social networks of "stealing our children's childhood".

The moves are part of a growing international trend: the United Kingdom, France, Norway, Pakistan and the United States are now considering or implementing similar restrictions, often requiring parental consent or digital ID verification.

At first glance, these policies appear to be about protecting young people from mental health harm, explicit content and addictive design. But beneath the language of safety lies something else: a shift in cultural values.

The bans reflect a kind of moral turn, one that risks reviving conservative notions that predate the internet. Might we be entering a new Victorian era of the internet, where the digital lives of young people are reshaped not just by regulation but by a reassertion of moral control?

POLICING MORAL DECLINE

The Victorian era was marked by rigid social codes, modest dress and formal communication. Public behaviour was tightly regulated, and schools were seen as key sites for socialising children into gender and class hierarchies.

Today, we see echoes of this in the way "digital wellness" is framed. Screen-time apps, detox retreats and "dumb" phones are marketed as tools for cultivating a "healthy" digital life – often with moral undertones. The ideal user is calm, focused and restrained. The impulsive, distracted or emotionally expressive user is pathologised.

This framing is especially evident in the work of Jonathan Haidt, psychologist and author of The Anxious Generation, a central text in the age-restriction movement. Haidt argues that social media accelerates performative behaviour and emotional dysregulation in young people.

Viewed this way, youth digital life involves declining psychological resilience, rising polarisation and the erosion of shared civic values, rather than being a symptom of complex developmental or technological shifts. This has helped popularise the idea that social media is not just harmful but also corrupting.

Yet the data behind these claims is contested. Critics have pointed out that Haidt's conclusions often rely on correlational studies and selective interpretations.

Indeed, youth digital life is not just about passive consumption. It's a site of literacy, expression and connection. Young people stitch together memes, remix videos, and engage in rapid-fire editing to produce new forms of storytelling. These are not signs of decline but evolving literacies. To regulate youth access without acknowledging these skills risks suppressing the new in favour of preserving the familiar.

REGULATE PLATFORMS, NOT YOUNG PEOPLE

This is where the Victorian metaphor becomes useful. Just as Victorian norms sought to maintain a particular social order, today's age restrictions risk enforcing a narrow vision of what digital life should look like.

On the surface, terms such as "brain rot" appear to convey the harm of excessive internet use. But in practice, they're often used by teenagers to laugh about and resist the pressures of 24/7 hustle culture.

But concerns about young people's digital habits seem rooted in a fear of cognitive difference – the idea that some users are too impulsive, too irrational, too deviant.

Young people are often cast as unable to communicate properly, hiding behind screens, and avoiding phone calls. But these changing habits reflect broader shifts in how we relate to technology. The expectation to be always available, always responsive, ties us to our devices in ways that make switching off genuinely difficult.

Age restrictions may address some symptoms, but they don't tackle the underlying design of platforms that are built to keep us scrolling, sharing and generating data.

If society and governments are serious about protecting young people, perhaps the better strategy is to regulate the digital platforms. Legal scholar Eric Goldman calls the age-restriction approach a "segregate and suppress" strategy – one that punishes youth rather than holding platforms accountable.

We would never ban children from playgrounds, but we do expect those spaces to be safe. Where are the safety barriers for digital spaces? Where is the duty of care from digital platforms?

For many, the internet has become a moral battleground where values around attention, communication and identity are fiercely contested. But it is also a social infrastructure, one that young people are already shaping through new literacies and forms of expression.

Shielding them from it risks suppressing the very skills and voices that could help us build a better digital future. *—PTI*

Youth digital life involves declining psychological resilience, rising polarisation and the erosion of shared civic values ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Guns before ballots: Madagascar follows global legacy of military coups

Weeks of nationwide Gen-Z protests in Madagascar sparked by power and water shortages escalated and led to a military coup that forced President Andry Rajoelina into exile. Army officer Colonel Michael Randrianirina has been sworn in as the new leader of the Indian Ocean nation.

The colonel is not the first in history to rise from the barracks to the presidential palace.

Here are five other famous military leaders who followed a similar trajectory.

MYANMAR: MIN AUNG HLAING

After decades of a gradual, deliberate ascent through the Myanmar military, Min Aung Hlaing was appointed joint chief of staff of the army, navy and air force, the military's third-highest position, in 2010. A year later, he was appointed commander-in-chief and would spend the next decade consolidating his power and influence.

Facing mandatory retirement in July 2021, Min Aung Hlaing seized power through a military coup in February that year, declaring a state of emergency, transferring all state power to himself and establishing a military government, the State Administration Council (SAC). Since then he has ruled Myanmar under various titles. The military government has announced plans to hold a general election by year's end.

UGANDA: IDI AMIN

Idi Amin began his military career as a cook and served in the British colonial army. After Uganda's 1962 independence, he rose quickly through its military ranks under President Milton Obote's guidance to become commander of the army. In January 1971, Obote was in Singapore for a Commonwealth summit when Amin took control in a military coup. Obote fled to neighbouring Tanzania after the coup, which was the result of the two men's growing political and personal animosity.

Ugandans initially welcomed Amin's rise to power, as he promised to release political prisoners and restore democracy. However, his regime rapidly descended into a brutal dictatorship characterised by violence and human rights abuses.

Amin was himself overthrown in April 1979 by an invasion force composed of the Tanzanian military and Ugandan rebels.

TURKEY: KENAN EVREN

Kenan Evren began his military career as an officer from a military academy, rising through the ranks over several decades until he reached the highest rank of general, serving as the chief of the general staff. He led a military coup in Turkey in September 1980 after months of violence between left-wing and right-wing militants that nearly brought the country to civil war.

The leader of the coup took over the presidency and then rewrote the constitution to guarantee the military's political power. The military dissolved Parliament and ruled through a National Security Council, which Evren was the head of, effectively running the country as a dictator.

His period of sole military rule ended when he formally assumed the title of the seventh president of Turkey in November 1982, after a new constitution was approved by referendum, and he served until November 1989.

In 2012, he was put on trial for leading the coup and later sentenced to life imprisonment for crimes against the state.

GHANA: JERRY RAWLINGS

Jerry Rawlings rose to power through two military coups, first in June 1979 and then in December 1981, before transitioning to a democratically-elected president.

Rawlings, a pilot in the Ghanaian Air Force, became well-known for the successful first coup he led. He briefly held the position of ruler of Ghana before ceding it.

In a second coup in 1981, he toppled the civilian government and commanded the Provisional National Defence Council military dictatorship in the early 1990s. Following the drafting of a new constitution in 1992, he was democratically elected as president and held office for two four-year terms, from January 1993 to January 2001.

His legacy is complex, with both praise for his economic reforms and criticism for human rights abuses, including arbitrary detentions and forced disappearances.

CHILE: AUGUSTO PINOCHET

Augusto Pinochet was a career military officer who had risen through the ranks and was appointed commander-in-chief of the army by Chile President Salvador Allende in August 1973. The following month, Allende, the democratically-elected socialist president, was overthrown in a bloody military coup led by Pinochet. The military surrounded and bombed the presidential palace, La Moneda, where Allende remained until his death by suicide.

In the aftermath, the military imposed a junta where Pinochet emerged to establish himself as its single head before instituting a cruel, 17-year dictatorship. Until 1990, Chileans lived in a period marked by systematic human rights abuses and the implementation of radical free-market economic policies. *—PTI*

On 14 October, Col Michael Randrianirina, commander of the CAPSAT military unit, announced to protesters in Antananarivo that the armed forces were taking control of the country ***PHOTO: PTI***

- Army officer Colonel Michael Randrianirina has been sworn in as the new leader of the Indian Ocean nation. The colonel is not the first in history to rise from the barracks to the presidential palace.

UK flays violence against minorities in B'desh

LONDON, 18 OCT

The UK government has issued a strong condemnation of the violence against minority religious communities in Bangladesh, with a commitment to support democratic transitions in the country. Sir Alan Campbell, Leader of the House of Commons, responded to a report from Insight UK detailing the persecution faced by Hindus, especially leading into the Diwali festival. MP Bob Blackman raised concerns over widespread oppression, destruction of temples, and attacks on homes. Campbell affirmed the UK's dedication to protecting religious freedom but did not commit to specific ministerial statements for safeguarding minorities. "Hindus are suffering... their houses being burned," Blackman stated. *—PTI*

Kenya ups security for former PM's funeral

NAIROBI, 18 OCT

Heavy security is enforced in Kisumu ahead of the final public viewing of former prime minister Raila Odinga, following deadly violence during prior events. Military and police are on alert at the stadium, where thousands of mourners await viewing Odinga's body after he died in India at 80. Previous public viewings turned tragic with three fatalities and numerous injuries from clashes and a stampede. Odinga's widow and brother urged peaceful mourning, with calls to avoid further violence. Renowned for his contributions to Kenya's democracy, Odinga was commemorated at parliament, receiving honors reserved for former presidents. Although he never won the presidency, he is celebrated for his and commitment to Kenya's political progress. *—PTI*

US, UN impose sanctions on Haiti gang leaders

UNITED NATIONS, 18 OCT

The United States and the United Nations have imposed sanctions on former Haitian presidential security chief Dimitri Herard and gang leader Kempes Sanon for their involvement in destabilising activities. Following previous designations of a gang coalition as a terrorist organisation, the UN Security Council unanimously mandated asset freezes and travel bans. Herard, linked to the assassination of President Jovenal Moïse, escaped prison and has been accused of colluding with powerful gangs. Sanon, leading the Bel Air gang, faces allegations of human rights violations. Armed gangs control 90 per cent of Port-au-Prince. These sanctions seek to curb the influence of gang leaders exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Haiti. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Chen-Ning Yang, Chinese Nobel physicist, dies

BEIJING, 18 OCT

Celebrated Chinese physicist and Nobel Laureate Chen Ning Yang has died in Beijing at the age of 103. Born in Hefei in 1922, Yang moved to the United States in the 1940s, where he made significant academic contributions. He won the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1957 for his groundbreaking work with Robert Mills, forming the Yang-Mills theory, vital to modern physics and the Standard Model. "Yang was one of the greatest theoretical physicists of the 20th century," noted Shi Yu from the Shanghai Institute for Advanced Studies. Yang's revolutionary contributions changed perceptions of China's scientific standing and inspired future generations to pursue excellence in the field. His legacy endures within the scientific community. *—PTI*

Pak bombs terror camp in Afghanistan

Munir tells Kabul to choose between peace & chaos as delegations head to Doha for talks

ISLAMABAD/ KABUL, 18 OCT

Pakistan launched fresh air strikes targeting terrorist hideouts in Afghanistan, killing several people, including three cricketers, casting a shadow over the expected talks in Doha amid a fragile ceasefire that had temporarily halted hostilities between the two sides.

The strikes followed a gun-and-bomb attack by terrorists at a military installation in North Waziristan, and just hours after Islamabad and Kabul extended their two-day ceasefire, the Dawn reported on Saturday.

The Hafiz Gul Bahadur group of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the early Friday attack on Khaddi Fort in Mir Ali. The security sources said they foiled the attack by eliminating all four attackers without suffering any loss.

Pakistan late Friday targeted the Angoor Adda region and also hideouts across Afghanistan's Urgun and Barmal districts of Paktika province, as security sources claimed that precision strikes were conducted against hideouts of the Hafiz Gul Bahadur group, reportedly killing dozens of fighters.

Pakistani security sources pointed out that the ceasefire agreement did not preclude strikes on terror outfits and their hideouts.

The fresh strikes came representatives from the two countries were expected to meet in Doha, where the Qatari government was set to make an effort for mediation. Reports from Afghanistan suggest that the Taliban delegation would include Defence Minister Mullah Yaqub Mujahid and intelligence chief Mullah Wasiq. Pakistan's Gen. Malik was expected to travel to Doha.

Afghan authorities also handed over the bodies of seven Pakistani citizens, including two security personnel, who were killed in the Chaman sector of Balochistan on Tuesday. There was outrage in Pakistan after videos were on social media, showed Afghan soldiers dragging the bodies of security personnel and desecrating them.

A Foreign Office spokesperson responding to reports that bodies of some Pakistani soldiers had been mutilated said: "This kind of savagery, bestiality, is condemnable, and it needs to be condemned in the strongest words possible.... It is beyond humanity."

Army chief Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir on Saturday warned Afghanistan to choose between "peace and chaos" as it asked Kabul to take firm and immediate action against terrorists using Afghan soil to launch attacks inside Pakistan. All proxies using Afghan soil would be met with a response to "raise them to dust", Munir warned.

Taliban Spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, however, said that Afghanistan reserved the right to respond. *—Agencies*

Locals inspect the site of a cross-border attack by the Pakistani army in Afghanistan's eastern Paktika province, Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

20,000 families have been displaced from Spin Boldak region due to the clashes

> **I do understand Pakistan attacked or there is an attack going on with Afghanistan, that's an easy one for me to solve if I have to solve that. I like saving people's lives... I think we are going to have success with this war**
>
> —Donald Trump, US President

Venezuela doesn't want to f***k around: Trump

WASHINGTON, 18 OCT

US President Donald Trump said his Venezuelan counterpart Nicolas Maduro doesn't want to "f***k around" with American, claiming that the latter has offered major concessions to ease the military tensions.

"He has offered everything, you're right. You know why? Because he doesn't want to f***k around with the United States," Trump said at the White House Thursday when asked about reports that Maduro had floated de-escalation plans.

Trump's remarks came against the backdrop of a US military build-up in the Caribbean. The US has deployed guided missile destroyers, F-35 fighter jets, a nuclear submarine and around 6,500 troops to combat "narcoterrorism". Trump had earlier authorised the CIA to conduct covert operations in Venezuela.

Washington's strikes in the Caribbean have killed at least 28 alleged drug smugglers. On Thursday, the US had struck a submarine and took the survivors – the first time there have been any – into custody. The US hasn't provided proof that the victims were criminals.

—Salar News with agencies

Israel identifies remains of one more hostage

People inspect the site of an Israeli airstrike on a cement plant in the southern Lebanese village of Ansar, Lebanon, Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

TEL AVIV, 18 OCT

Israel says the remains of another hostage that Hamas handed over the day before have been identified as Eliyahu Margalit, as the Palestinian militant group looks for more bodies under the rubble in the Gaza Strip and urges more aid to be allowed into the embattled enclave.

Israel's PM's Office said on Saturday Margalit's body was identified after testing by the National Centre for Forensic Medicine, and his family has been notified.

Margalit is the 10th returned hostage body since the ceasefire went into effect over a week ago. Hamas handed over an 11th body this week, but it wasn't that of a hostage. The effort to find the remains followed a warning from US President Donald Trump that he would green-light Israel to resume the war if Hamas doesn't return all 28' bodies.

Meanwhile, Hamas urged mediators to increase the flow of aid into Gaza. UN data showed 339 trucks have been offloaded for distribution in Gaza since the ceasefire began a week ago. Under the agreement, some 600 humanitarian aid trucks would be allowed to enter each day. *—PTI*

Keep the territory: Trump asks Russia, Ukraine to end war

WASHINGTON, 18 OCT

US President Donald Trump on Friday called on Kyiv and Moscow to "stop where they are" and end their brutal war, after a White House meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

"Enough blood has been shed, with property lines being defined by War and Guts," Trump said in a Truth Social post not long after hosting Zelenskyy and his team for more than two hours of talks. "They should stop where they are. Let both claim Victory, let History decide!"

Later, after arriving in Florida, where he is spending the weekend, Trump urged both sides to "stop the war immediately" and implied that Moscow keep territory it has taken from Kyiv.

"You go by the battle line wherever it is -- otherwise it is too complicated," Trump told reporters. "You stop at the battle line and both sides should go home, go to their families, stop the killing, and that should be it."

After meeting with Zelenskyy in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly last month, Trump said he believed the Ukrainians could win back all the territory they had lost to Russia. That was a dramatic shift for Trump, who had previously insisted that Kyiv would have to concede land lost to Russia to end the war.

US President Donald Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the White House on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

Zelenskyy after Friday's meeting said it was time for a ceasefire and negotiations.

Trump's tone on the war shifted after he held a lengthy phone call with Putin on Thursday and announced that he planned to meet with the Russian leader in Budapest, Hungary. *—PTI*

TRUMP GIVES TARIFF RELIEF TO AUTO INDUSTRY

Trump on Friday signed orders approving significant tariff relief for US auto and engine production and setting new 25 per cent tariffs on imported medium- and heavy-duty trucks and parts starting 1 November. Trump is also setting a 10 per cent tariff on imported buses. Trump also extended an arrangement that allowed automakers to reduce tariffs paid on imported vehicle parts.

Putin-Trump tunnel to connect Alaska and Siberia?

WASHINGTON/ MOSCOW, 18 OCT

After the KGB released 350-page Russian document on the assassination of former US president John F Kennedy showing a potential bridge between America and the then USSR, a Kremlin envoy has proposed building an undersea tunnel linking the superpowers.

Kremlin investment envoy Kirill Dmitriev said that the 112km "railroad and cargo link" between Siberia and Alaska could be built with the help of US billionaire Elon Musk's The Boring Company.

It would "unlock joint resource exploration" Dmitriev claimed.

The Kremlin maps show that at some point, the Cold War rivals had planned a 'Kennedy-Khrushchev World Peace Bridge' across the Bering Strait.

Dmitriev suggested that the bridge, which he claimed would cost at least $8 billion, could be called the Putin-Trump bridge.

"Imagine connecting the US and Russia, the Americas and the Afro-Eurasia with the Putin-Trump Tunnel," Dmitriev wrote on X, tagging Musk.

Trump said the proposal was "interesting" during his meeting with Zelenskyy. However, Zelenskyy said he was "not happy" about the proposal.

Earlier this year, Trump met Putin in Alaska.

—Salar News

COUPLE ARRESTED FOR RACIAL RAPE OF BRITISH SIKH WOMAN

LONDON, 18 OCT

Two individuals, a 49-year-old man and a 65-year-old woman from Sandwell, have been arrested on suspicion of the racially aggravated rape of a British Sikh woman in Oldbury, West Midlands, last month. West Midlands Police announced the arrests on Friday, noting they are connected to a second rape incident involving a woman in her 30s, which is not being treated as racially aggravated.

The Sikh woman, in her 20s, reported being sexually assaulted on Tame Road in Oldbury on 9 September. "We were called at around 7pm Thursday after a woman in her 30s reported she has been attacked... The man and woman have subsequently been arrested," police said.

In the earlier incident, two white male attackers allegedly told the victim, "you don't belong in this country". *—PTI*

David Attenborough becomes the oldest Daytime Emmy winner

PASADENA, 18 OCT

Sir David Attenborough, at 99 years old, has made history as the oldest recipient of a Daytime Emmy, surpassing Dick Van Dyke's previous record. Attenborough won the award for daytime personality, non-daily, for his role as host of Netflix's "Secret Lives of Orangutans." He was not present at the ceremony.

Van Dyke, who was 98 when he won in 2024 for a guest role in 'Days of Our Lives,' had held the record as the oldest actor to win a Daytime Emmy.

Jonathan Jackson, who plays Lucky Spencer on 'General Hospital,' and first-time nominee Susan Walters from 'The Young and the Restless' earned accolades in the supporting acting categories.

- At 99, David Attenborough has surpassed Dick Van Dyke's previous record of being the oldest Daytime Emmy winner. Van Dyke was 98 when he won it in 2024

Jackson has portrayed Lucky Spencer since 1993. Alley Mills received the guest performer award for her role as Heather Webber, marking her second Emmy win. "We are living in really dark times right now. Everything is crazy," Mills stated.

Walters expressed her gratitude, saying, "I am so happy that I won so I can thank my husband of 40 years," referring to Linden Ashby. *—PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

OVER EPSTEIN LINKS

UK's Prince Andrew gives up royal titles

LONDON, 18 OCT

Britain's Prince Andrew, the younger brother of King Charles III, has relinquished the title of Duke of York and all other royal honours after a "discussion" with the monarch, amid "continued accusations" around his association with American sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

The scandal-hit 65-year-old had already stopped using the "His Royal Highness (HRH)" title, having stepped back as a working royal earlier. On Friday, he announced that all his other titles will also become inactive, even as he continued to "vigorously" deny all accusations against him. As a son of the late Queen Elizabeth II, he will retain the title of "Prince" in accordance with Letters Patent issued in 1917 by King George V.

Prince Andrew with sex trafficker Jefferey Epstein **PHOTO: X**

"In discussion with the King, and my immediate and wider family, we have concluded the continued accusations about me distract from the work of His Majesty [Charles] and the royal family," Andrew said in a statement issued by Buckingham Palace.

Andrew's ex-wife and close friend, Sarah Ferguson, will also no longer use her title of the Duchess of York, but the titles of their daughters, Princess Beatrice and Eugenie, remain unaffected.

The decision comes amid renewed pressure on Andrew over reports of his relationship with Epstein and also links with an alleged Chinese spy. A memoir entitled 'Nobody's Girl' by Virginia Giuffre, who had sued the royal back in 2021 over an alleged sexual assault and died in April, is expected to further the allegations when it is released posthumously next week. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Hyundai opens plastic recycling plant in Indonesia

SEOUL, 18 OCT

South Korea's Hyundai Motor has opened a community-led plastic recycling facility in Bekasi, Indonesia. The company established a recycling centre in Bekasi in 2022 and has now expanded efforts with the new facility, reinforcing its commitment to addressing local environmental challenges.

The site will collect, wash, shred and recycle the waste plastic into recyclable materials while offering education programs for residents.

A local cooperative will help manage operations, and profits will be reinvested for sustainable management. In collaboration with Good Neighbours, it will support cooperative formation, workforce recruitment and training, and recycling education, creating a closed-loop system that turns waste into reusable raw materials. *—ANI*

ACME begins 1st phase of Gujarat's wind project

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

ACME Solar Holdings has commissioned the 28 million watts (MW) first phase of its 100 MW wind power project in Surendranagar, Gujarat on Saturday. With this, the company's total operational capacity has increased from 2,890 MW to 2,918 MW, it said in a statement. The ACME Eco Clean project was financed by Power Finance Corporation and built through in-house EPC. The power generated will be pooled a 33/220 kV and transmitted to the Shapar sub-station via a dedicated single circuit 220 kV line. The facility will share the sub-station with ACME's 50 MW wind project. Power from the project will be supplied under a 25-year Power Purchase Agreement with Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Limited. *—PTI*

Users can now give FASTag annual pass as gift

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on Saturday announced that users can now gift the FASTag annual pass through the Rajmargyatra app. By selecting tahe 'Add Pass' option, a user can enter the recipient's vehicle number and contact details. Following OTP verification, the annual pass is activated on the FASTag linked to that vehicle. The FASTag pass offers a seamless and cost-effective travel option for national highway users, valid at approximately 1,150 toll plazas across India. It eliminates the need for frequent recharges, allowing one-time payment of Rs 3,000 for one-year validity or 200 toll plaza crossings. The pass is available for all non-commercial vehicles with a valid FASTag. *—PTI*

Dhanteras festive spending hits record Rs 1 lakh crore

The purchases were high despite sharp increase in prices

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Indian consumers spent an estimated Rs 1 lakh crore during the Dhanteras festival this year, driven by robust gold and silver purchases despite sharp price increases, a leading traders' body said on Saturday.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) said gold and silver sales alone accounted for Rs 60,000 crore of the total, marking a 25 per cent increase from last year, as shoppers flocked to bullion markets despite gold prices surging 60 per cent year-on-year to cross Rs 1,30,000 per 10g.

"The past two days have seen an unprecedented rush in jewellery markets," said Pankaj Arora, national president of CAIT's jewellery chapter, the All India Jewellers and Goldsmith Federation.

Delhi's bullion markets recorded sales exceeding Rs 10,000 crore, he said in a statement.

Customers at a jewellery shop on the occasion of the Dhanteras festival, in New Delhi, on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

Dhanteras, celebrated on the thirteenth day of the Hindu month of Kartik, is considered an auspicious day for purchasing gold, silver, utensils and other items symbolising prosperity.

It marks the beginning of the five-day Diwali festival.

Silver prices also climbed roughly 55 per cent to Rs 1,80,000 per kilogram from Rs 98,000 last year, but demand remained strong as consumers view precious metals as secure investments, CAIT said.

- Dhanteras, celebrated on the thirteenth day of the Hindu month of Kartik, is considered an auspicious day for purchasing gold, silver, utensils and other items symbolising prosperity.

Beyond bullion, the festival generated Rs 15,000 crore in utensils and kitchen appliance sales, Rs 10,000 crore in electronics and electrical goods, and Rs 3,000 crore in decorative items and religious materials, according to the traders' group.

CAIT Secretary General Praveen Khandelwal, who is also a member of parliament, attributed the surge partly to reductions in goods and services tax rates and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's campaign promoting locally-made products. *—PTI*

Gold, silver prices fall after skyrocketing

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

The precious metals market witnessed a sharp correction on Friday, with both Gold and Silver prices falling on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) after weeks of record-breaking gains. Analysts attributed the decline to profit-taking following an extraordinary rally that pushed prices to historic highs.

The price of 24-carat gold, which had recently peaked at Rs 1,32,294 per 10 grams, dropped around 3 per cent to Rs 1,25,957. Silver saw a steeper 8 per cent fall, slipping from Rs 1,70,415 to Rs 1,53,929 per kilogram.

Banking and market expert Ajay Bagga described the decline as a "necessary tactical retreat", citing easing global tensions after a conciliatory statement from US President Donald Trump on tariffs against China.

He added that the long-term outlook for precious metals remains robust, supported by global de-dollarisation, persistent Silver supply deficits, and ongoing geopolitical uncertainty.

Ajay Kedia, Director of Kedia Commodities, echoed the sentiment, calling the fall "overdue" after a parabolic nine-week rally.

He said upcoming peace talks involving US, China and Russia had encouraged investors to book profits in an overbought market.

Both experts agreed the correction was part of a healthy market cycle rather than a reversal.

They advised investors to treat the dip as an opportunity to accumulate long-term positions, given the favourable fundamentals for Gold and Silver. *—ANI*

GOLD TO HIT ₹1.50L/10G, SAYS GEM & JEWELLERY COUNCIL

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Gold prices in India are expected to reach a record Rs 1.50 lakh per 10 grams in the coming months, according to Anantha Padmanaban, founder member and former chairman of the All India Gem & Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC).

The current spot rate stands around Rs 1.31 lakh. Padmanaban cited strong global momentum, central bank purchases, and high public demand in countries like China and Japan as key drivers.

He added that prices could rise further if US-China trade talks fail and the Russia-Ukraine conflict continues, enhancing Gold's safe-haven appeal.

Despite potential short-term corrections, the metal's historic surge, including a USD 150 per ounce rise within 30 hours, shows unprecedented momentum. *—ANI*

3K sue Johnson & Johnson in UK over cancer risk in baby powder

NEW JERSEY, 18 OCT

Around 3,000 people in the UK have filed a lawsuit against pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson (J&J), accusing the company of knowingly selling talcum-based baby powder contaminated with asbestos, a mineral linked to deadly cancers.

The claim, brought by KP Law against J&J and its subsidiary Kenvue Ltd, alleges the firm was aware since the 1960s that its products contained fibrous talc as well as tremolite and actinolite both classified as asbestos.

According to lawyers, J&J concealed the dangers for decades instead of issuing public warnings, while lobbying regulators and funding studies to downplay the health risks.

The claim, estimated at over £1 billion, could become the largest product liability case in British history.

Michael Rawlinson KC told the court that all mines supplying J&J's talc contained asbestos and that the company "acted in bad faith to protect its profits and reputation."

He added that J&J pushed US regulators to adopt lower sensitivity testing standards that failed to detect asbestos traces.

J&J denies all allegations. Kenvue said its baby powder met regulatory requirements, was asbestos-free, and does not cause cancer.

"The safety of Johnson's Baby Powder is backed by years of independent testing," the company said.

Claimants include ovarian cancer and mesothelioma patients who say they used the product for decades, unaware of potential contamination.

Many, like 63-year-old Siobhan Ryan, said they trusted J&J products for their children, only to later face life-threatening illness. *—Agencies*

Retail inflation for farm, rural workers eases: Govt Data

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Retail inflation for farm and rural workers eased to -0.07 per cent and 0.31 per cent, respectively, in September from 1.07 per cent and 1.26 per cent in August, respectively, according to the Labour Ministry data released on Saturday.

All-India Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-RL) decreased by 0.11 points to 136.23, while the index for Rural Labourers decreased by 0.18 points to 136.42.

In August, the indices stood at 136.34 and 136.60, respectively. Food Index declined by 0.47 points for agricultural workers and 0.58 points for rural workers, with food inflation at -2.35 per cent for AL and -1.81 per cent for RL in September. *—PTI*

3,169 COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

GST cut benefits reaching consumers, says govt

NEW DELHI, OCT 18

Finance Minister **Nirmala Sitharaman** on Saturday said the benefits of GST reforms are reaching consumers in the form of lower prices. Addressing a press conference on the GST Bachat Utsav, she noted that the government has been monitoring price reductions in 54 items across the country since the new GST rates came into effect on 22 September.

"GST rate reductions have led to increased purchases, and this consumption drive will continue," Sitharaman said. She added that companies are passing on the benefits to consumers, and in some cases, price reductions have exceeded the weighted-average GST cut.

The Department of Consumer Affairs has received 3,169 complaints regarding prices not reflecting the GST cuts. Of these, 3,075 have been forwarded to nodal officers in the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs, with 94 resolved. The department will soon enable a portal feature to forward complaints directly to chief commissioners in the relevant zones.

The GST overhaul merged rates of 5 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent, and 28 per cent into just 5 per cent and 18 per cent, reducing prices for 99 per cent of daily-use items, from toothpaste and shampoo to cars and televisions. *—PTI*

HDFC's Q2 profit soars by 10%

MUMBAI, 18 OCT

HDFC Bank announced a 10 per cent rise in its consolidated net profit for the September quarter, reaching Rs 19,610.67 crore. On a standalone basis, profit increased by 10.82 per cent to Rs 18,641.28 crore. Overall income rose to Rs 91,040 crore, while the gross non-performing assets (NPA) ratio improved to 1.24 per cent.

ICICI'S PROFIT RISES

ICICI Bank's consolidated net profit rose by 3.2 per cent to Rs 13,357 crore. Its standalone profit grew to Rs 12,359 crore. Core net interest income increased by 7.4 per cent to Rs 21,529 crore, and deposit growth stood at 9.1 per cent, with gross NPA improving to 1.58 per cent.

PNB SEES 14% PROFIT

Punjab National Bank experienced a 14 per cent rise in standalone net profit to Rs 4,904 crore. Total income reached Rs 36,214 crore, and the gross NPA ratio improved to 3.45 per cent.

IDBI BANK'S PROFIT NEARLY DOUBLES

IDBI Bank reported a nearly doubled profit of Rs 3,627 crore, including gains from its investment in NSDL. Gross NPA fell to 2.65 per cent.*—PTI*

'Electronics consumption to touch Rs 20L cr'

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Union Electronics and IT Minister **Ashwini Vaishnaw** on Saturday announced that India is expected to see an additional Rs 20 lakh crore in electronics consumption this year, following recent GST reforms.

Speaking at a joint press conference with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, Vaishnaw highlighted data from major retail chains showing a surge in sales.

During the recent Navaratri festival, electronics sales rose 20–25 per cent compared to the previous year, with high-value items such as 85-inch televisions selling out entirely.

The minister noted that rising consumer demand is driving domestic manufacturing, which is now expanding at a double-digit CAGR.

Vaishnaw projected overall electronics consumption would grow more than 10 per cent this year, resulting in the Rs 20 lakh crore additional consumption over last year. *—PTI*

India, US trade talks are making progress: Goyal

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal announced that trade discussions between India and the United States regarding a proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA) are progressing in a cordial atmosphere.

He emphasised that the interests of Indian farmers, fishermen, and the MSME sector will be prioritised: "No agreement can be made until we take care of the interests of India's farmers, fishermen, and MSME sector."

The Indian delegation, led by Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal, recently held talks in Washington, continuing negotiations directed by leaders of both nations in February.

They aim to complete the first tranche of the agreement by October-November 2025, having conducted five rounds of negotiations so far. *—PTI*

TRADITIONAL TO DIGITAL

E-jewellery wins over mkt as India's gold rush goes digital

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Once a domain of velvet-lined trays and neighbourhood jewellers, jewellery shopping in India is undergoing a glittering transformation. What was long anchored in trust, tradition, and touch is now increasingly just a click away.

India's deep-rooted love affair with gold and diamonds is entering a bold new chapter - online. As digital platforms gain credibility through hallmark certifications, brand assurances, and seamless service, Indian consumers are warming up to the idea that buying fine jewellery doesn't necessarily require a trip to the store.

And the numbers prove it. According to a recent FICCI-Deloitte report, 73 per cent of consumers now begin their product discovery journey online - even for tactile categories like jewellery - while 53 per cent still lean on offline stores to seal the deal. But the tides are shifting fast.

The Indian jewellery market, pegged at USD 91 billion in 2025, is expected to reach USD 146 billion by 2030. According to Siddharth Bhagat, Director, Amazon Fashion and Beauty, India, precious jewellery sales on the platform have surged 96 per cent year-on-year, with gold and diamond jewellery, including lab-grown diamonds, driving the demand.

Amazon's jewellery segment, covering hallmarked gold, diamond, silver and lab-grown diamond collections, has registered a sharp rise in consumer confidence.

With positive demand, the marketplace now has over five lakh styles from established brands such as CaratLane, PN Gadgil Jewellers, Joyalukkas, PC Chandra, Malabar Gold and Diamonds, and KISNA.

He noted that customers are increasingly choosing everyday-wear pieces in 14-karat gold, which has grown nearly 50 per cent year-on-year, followed by a strong uptick in 18-karat jewellery. The platform also reports that fine jewellery now starts at Rs 2,000 for sterling silver and goes up to Rs 40,000 for gold and diamond pieces, expanding affordability and access to a wider audience.

PHOTO: AI

"The growing shift toward online shopping shows how quickly the jewellery market is embracing digital change, a move the industry fully supports. While physical stores still dominate big purchases like bridal or investment jewellery, the online space has found its place for everyday wear, lightweight designs, and jewellery in lower caratages such as 9K and 14K. Younger, tech-savvy shoppers appreciate the ease and variety that e-commerce brings," Aksha Kamboj, Vice President - India Bullion and Jewellers Association (IBJA) said.

Currently, online jewellery sales account for around 8-10 per cent of India's market, while over 85 per cent of purchases still happen in stores. Although still small, online sales are growing fast and outpacing offline growth. This shows the market is moving toward a combined online-offline approach, rather than a competition between the two.

In a sign of changing consumer preferences, Amazon has launched several collections of lab-grown diamonds at entry prices starting from Rs 1,699, tapping into sustainability and price-conscious trends in global luxury. Bhagat said Amazon is the first and only online marketplace in India specifically focusing on this segment's whitespace.

Online jewellery shopping's transformation is being driven by multiple trust-building factors - BIS hallmarking, purchase protection, easy exchange options, and brand-backed authenticity. These have collectively demystified the once "offline-only" purchase, extending jewellery retail beyond metros into Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.

"Looking ahead, the online jewellery segment is poised for substantial growth, propelled by increasing digital adoption in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, the rapid expansion of quick commerce and direct-to-consumer (D2C) jewellery brands, the integration of augmented and virtual reality for enhanced virtual try-on experiences, and rising consumer demand for certified, lightweight, and fashion-forward jewellery," Anand Ramanathan, Partner and Consumer Industry Leader, Deloitte South Asia, said. Amazon sees a greater footprint during religious occasions like Akshaya Tritiya and Dhanteras, with gold coin sales seeing a spike. *—PTI*

Series opener in Christchurch washed out

CHRISTCHURCH, 18 OCT

The first T20 International between New Zealand and England was abandoned on Saturday after rain prevented the tourists from defending their score of 153 for six. Rain arrived at Hagley Oval just after an unbeaten 49 from Sam Curran had lifted England to a competitive score off 20 overs on an unpredictable pitch. New Zealand's batters never got a chance to chase, leaving just two matches to decide the series—in Christchurch again on Monday and Auckland on Thursday. England's batters struggled for fluency after being sent in, reduced to 81 for five in the 12th over when veteran opener Jos Buttler was caught in the deep for 29. Curran injected some momentum through a flurry of boundaries over the closing stages, with 19 runs coming from the final over bowled by seamer Jacob Duffy.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Jyothi scripts history with WC Final bronze medal

NANJING, 18 OCT

Decorated Indian archer Jyothi Surekha Vennam on Saturday became the first Indian woman compound archer to win a medal at the World Cup Final, clinching the bronze with a flawless performance here. The reigning Asian Games champion was at her imperious best against world No. 2 Ella Gibson of Great Britain, shooting 15 perfect arrows to prevail 150-145 and secure her maiden podium finish in the tournament. The eight-archer World Cup season finale saw the 29-year-old Indian begin with a confident 143-140 win over Alexis Ruiz of the USA in the quarterfinals. Jyothi, however, went down narrowly to world No. 1 Andrea Becerra of Mexico 143-145 in the semifinals after a closely fought contest.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X/@MOTOGP

Fabio Quartararo grabs pole at Australian MotoGP

PARIS, 18 OCT

Fabio Quartararo edged Marco Bezzecchi to clinch pole position Saturday for the Australian MotoGP sprint race and grand prix, but needed a new white-knuckle lap record to beat the Italian. In chilly conditions but with the track dry after early rain, the French Yamaha rider surged round the waterfront circuit with a flying lap at the death of 1min 26.465sec . It was enough to topple Bezzecchi by just 0.031sec, after the Aprilia rider had clocked 1:26.492 on Friday to smash Jorge Martin's previous best at Phillip Island set in 2023. —*PTI*

Ningbo Open 2025: Elena Rybakina reach final

RIYADH, 18 OCT

Elena Rybakina powered into the Ningbo Open final with a 6-3, 6-2 victory over Jasmine Paolini on Saturday that keeps her chances alive of qualifying for the WTA Finals. Paolini could have secured her ticket to next month's season finale in Riyadh with success on Saturday. But the Italian's defeat means the battle for the last two spots will be settled at next week's Pan-Pacific Open in Tokyo, with Mirra Andreeva also still in contention. "I knew the match was going to be very tough," said Rybakina, who improved her head-to-head record against Paolini to 3-3.—*PTI*

1st ODI: Returning Kohli, Rohit in focus

Three-match ODI series, Shubman Gill leads new-look side against Australia

PERTH, 18 OCT

Even amid the emotional theme of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma's return to the Indian fold, Shubman Gill's maiden outing as full-time ODI skipper provides an equally compelling narrative to the first one-dayer against Australia here on Sunday.

Kohli and Rohit are coming back to national colors after playing the Champions Trophy in March, and the dynamics of Indian cricket have changed irrevocably in these seven months.

The cricketing ecosystem has learned to survive the prolonged absence of Kohli and Rohit at least in two formats in this interim period.

So, what do these two veteran batters now have to offer to the side?

Before delving into that question, let's be clear about it. Kohli and Rohit will be counted among the greatest one-day batters across eras and by any yardstick.

They have also been training hard for this series. Rohit seemed to have shed a few kilos and molded himself into a chiseled figure, and Kohli was sweating it out in London, his new base, with a private trainer.

But the challenge for these two giants is to shake off the accumulated rust post the IPL, their last competitive outing.

It might just be a blessing for them that their return coincided with a series against Australia, a team that had cathartic influence during the course of their long careers.

In that context, the three-match ODI series can be considered as a barometer of their individual drive and willingness to travel still farther in their working lives as one-format players. But unlike Kohli, Rohit needs to come to terms with his new role of being just a senior player.

India's captain Shubman Gill and Australia's captain Mitchell Marsh pose with the trophy ahead of the 3-match ODI series PHOTO: PTI

ROHIT SHARMA PHOTO: PTI

Virat Kohli PHOTO: PTI

INDIA VS AUSTRALIA

INDIA vs AUSTRALIA
Match starts at
9.00 am IST

HEAD TO HEAD AT PERTH

PLAYED:	152
AUS Won:	84
INDIA Won:	58
NO RESULT:	10

Rohit's previous T20I and ODI outings ended with celebration after guiding the team to ICC trophies, and he was leading the side even in his last Test appearance in Melbourne. If Kohli can produce those brilliantly calibrated knocks and Rohit can bring his incandescent shot-making up the order, then these two stalwarts can hope to hang on for long.

It will be fascinating to watch an old rivalry come to life again as Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood will try to keep the Ro-Ko duo quiet once more.

The celebrated cricketers will clearly know that they no longer have the immunity of a leadership role or the luxury of time, as the current selectors and team management have no deep remorse in taking some harsh calls with the future in mind, particularly the 2027 ODI World Cup.

Chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar hinted as much.

Smith to lead Australia in Ashes: Bailey

Steve Smith will lead Australia in this year's Ashes if regular Test skipper Pat Cummins fails to recover from his back injury, confirmed selection chair George Bailey.

He is also unlikely to feature in the first Ashes Test, starting November 21 in Perth, and in that scenario, former skipper Smith will captain Australia.

"If Pat doesn't play, Smudge (Smith) will captain. That's business as usual for us. That formula has worked," Bailey was quoted as saying by the 'Sydney Morning Herald'.

—*PTI*

WOMEN'S ODI WORLD CUP

Knight fears Smriti show ahead of India-England clash

INDORE, 18 OCT

Former England captain Heather Knight has issued a strong warning ahead of the India vs England Women's World Cup clash, calling Smriti Mandhana "still the same old menace."

Under pressure to revive their campaign after back-to-back defeats, India will have to consider adding a sixth bowler to bring more balance to their attack when they face England in a crucial Women's ODI World Cup match here on Sunday.

India's campaign has hit a stumbling block after successive three-wicket losses to South Africa and Australia in Visakhapatnam, results that have left their strategy under the scanner.

The combination of five batters, a wicketkeeper, and five bowlers, three of them all-rounders, has been India's trusted template through much of this World Cup cycle.

But its limitations have been brutally exposed, forcing a rethink as the 'Women in Blue' now stare at a must-win scenario, needing two victories from their remaining three matches to stay alive in the semifinal race.

India vs England
Match starts at
3.00 pm IST

The five-bowler approach came undone against South Africa, yet the management persisted with it against Australia, resulting in another defeat.

It offered clinching evidence that India cannot afford to field an attack lacking variety and bite against top teams.

The absence of a specialist bowler proved costly as both South Africa and Australia chased down 251 and 330, exposing India's inability to apply pressure.

India's fascination for batting depth in the form of multiple all-rounders has made them bench a genuine wicket-taker like pacer Renuka Singh for Amanjot Kaur. —*PTI*

Shreyas-led K'taka charge to earn a draw

RAJKOT, 18 OCT

Karnataka's reluctance for an early declaration robbed them of the time to bowl out Saurashtra in their second innings as the Ranji Trophy Elite B match ended in a draw on the fourth and final day here on Saturday.

Saurashtra were 128 for five in their second innings on an uneven pitch when the match came to a close.

Just like in the first innings, leg-spinner Shreyas Gopal was Karnataka's star in the second innings too, bagging three wickets to complete a match-haul of 11 wickets.

Chasing an improbable 229 in one and a half sessions, Saurashtra were in a spot of bother at 43 for four in the 13th over, and they had 40 overs more to negotiate.

Shreyas did all the damage upfront using the unpredictability of the track to the hilt, and the batters struggled to pick his quick off the surface googlies.

His delivery to dismiss Ansh Gosai underlined that point, as the Saurashtra right-hander looked to play a googly with static feet, but the ball zipped past him to crash onto the stumps.

But Saurashtra's fifth wicket pair of Gajjar Sammar (43 not out, 110 balls) and Jay Gohil (41, 73 balls), the concussion substitute for Taranggohel batted resolutely while adding 81 runs.

The stand, which lasted for 26 overs, ensured three points for Saurashtra, and Karnataka would rue their call to bat on well into the second session despite having a handy 180-plus lead.

Brief scores: At Rajkot, Karnataka: 372 all out and 232 all out in 74.2 overs (Mayank Agarwal 64, KL Shrijith 31) vs Saurashtra: 376 all out and 128/5 in 43 overs (Gajjar Sammar 43 not out, Jay Gohil 41 not out; Shreyas Gopal 3/43).

Jharkhand crushes Tamil Nadu by innings and 114 runs

Jharkhand humbled former champions Tamil Nadu by an innings and 114 runs with young off-spinner Rishav Raj, playing his maiden first-class match, grabbing four wickets on the fourth and final day of the Ranji Trophy Group A match, here Saturday.

With Jharkhand virtually assured of a victory on Friday after asking Tamil Nadu to follow on, it was a matter of time before the fragile Tamil Nadu batting crumbled.

Jharkhand, who has scored 419 in the opening essay, had dismissed TN for 93 in the first innings and enforced a follow-on. —*PTI*

BENGAL VS UTTARAKHAND

Bengal's Abhimanyu Easwaran, left, and Mohammed Shami celebrate after winning the Ranji Trophy cricket match at the Eden Gardens PHOTO: PTI

DP World India C'ship: Nakajima takes lead

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Playing a bogey-free round clearly is the ticket to the top spot at the Delhi Golf Course.

On Saturday, Keita Nakajima did it to card a 65 for a three-day total of 199 at the inaugural $4 million DP World India Championship, 17 under par for the course at the end of Day 3 and two shots clear of overnight leader Tommy Fleetwood.

Keita Nakajima PHOTO: PTI

Day 1 leader Shane Lowry was a further shot behind on 202, the common factor between the three being a bogey-free round on their best day. With the weekend rounds reduced to two-ball groups, Nakajima and Lowry were together while Fleetwood was paired with Brian Harman.

The 25-year-old Nakajima, who won the Indian Open last year and was runner-up this year. —*PTI*

Miranda appointed head coach

CHENNAI, 18 OCT

Indian Super League (ISL) side Chennaiyin FC has appointed former India midfielder Clifford Miranda as their new head coach, the club announced on Saturday.

The 43-year-old, who served as India's men's U23 coach briefly in 2023, will become the first Indian full-time head coach of the club. The Goan succeeds Scotsman Owen Coyle, who left the club in July.

"New Head Coach reporting for duty. Welcome, Clifford Miranda," tweeted Chennaiyin FC.

Miranda had worked as an assistant coach of FC Goa, Odisha FC, Mohun Bagan Super Giant, and Mumbai City FC in the past. He hung up his playing boots after playing 45 matches for the country between 2005 and 2014.

His first assignment as head coach of the two-time ISL champions will be the AIFF Super Cup that kicks off in his home state, Goa, on October 25. —*PTI*

World Junior C'ships: Tanvi storms into final

GUWAHATI, 18 OCT

India's top-seeded Tanvi Sharma produced a near-perfect match against China's Liu Si Ya to storm into the final of the BWF World Junior Champions here on Saturday.

The 16-year-old Tanvi followed the footsteps of former world No.1 Saina Nehwal and Aparna Popat to become only the third Indian female player to qualify for the final of the tournament, recording a 15-11, 15-9 win over her opponent.

Tanvi will now play against the second-seeded Anyapat Phichitpreechasak from Thailand, who fought back from a game down to beat compatriot Yataweemin Ketklieng 10-15, 15-11, 15-5 in the other semifinal.

Men's singles: 1-Mohd. Zaki Ubaidillah (Indonesia) bt Li Zhi Hang (China) 14-16, 16-14, 15-12.

Tanvi had assured India of a medal in the World Junior Championships for the first time in 17 years, and she came out fighting against Li from the first point in their semifinal clash. —*PTI*

POSTECOGLOU SACKED

PL: Chelsea defeat Nottingham Forest 3-0

LONDON, 18 OCT

Ange Postecoglou has been sacked as Nottingham Forest manager after just 39 days in charge on Saturday.

A statement after Forest's 3-0 defeat by Chelsea said: "Nottingham Forest football club can confirm that after a series of disappointing results and performances, Ange Postecoglou has been relieved of his duties as head coach with immediate effect."

Josh Acheampong, Reece James, and Pedro Neto scored in the win without Chelsea head coach Enzo Maresca at the touchline as he served a one-game touchline ban after getting dismissed in Chelsea's win over Liverpool.

Josh Acheampong has scored his first goal for Chelsea at the professional level PHOTO: X/@CHELSEA

Ange Postecoglou's future hangs by a thread after three second-half goals secured Chelsea's Premier League victory at Nottingham Forest's City Ground, extending Forest's winless run to eight games.

Boos rang out around the City Ground at full-time, with owner Evangelos Marinakis not spotted in the stands after the break as Forest spiraled to a sixth defeat since Postecoglou's appointment on September 9.Postecoglou will bemoan Forest's failure to capitalise on a dominant first half, when striker Taiwo Awoniyi, making his first start since a serious abdominal injury left him in a coma last season, missed an early chance. Morgan Gibbs-White also missed two first-half chances. —*PTI*

Anahat Singh bows out in Boston quarters

NEW DELHI, 18 OCT

Reigning women's national champion Anahat Singh bowed out in the quarterfinals of the Boston Open, a USD 15,000 PSA Challenger event, after losing to Egypt's Jana Swaify in a five-game thriller on Saturday.

Delhi teenager Anahat, the world No. 45 and second seed in the tournament, rallied strongly by winning the third and fourth games to take the contest into the decider before her eighth-seeded opponent sealed the affair 11-4, 11-9, 6-1,1 3 11, 11-5. Anahat defeated American Charlotte Sze 11-4, 11-6, 9-1,1, 11-8 in the round of 16 on Thursday. —*PTI*